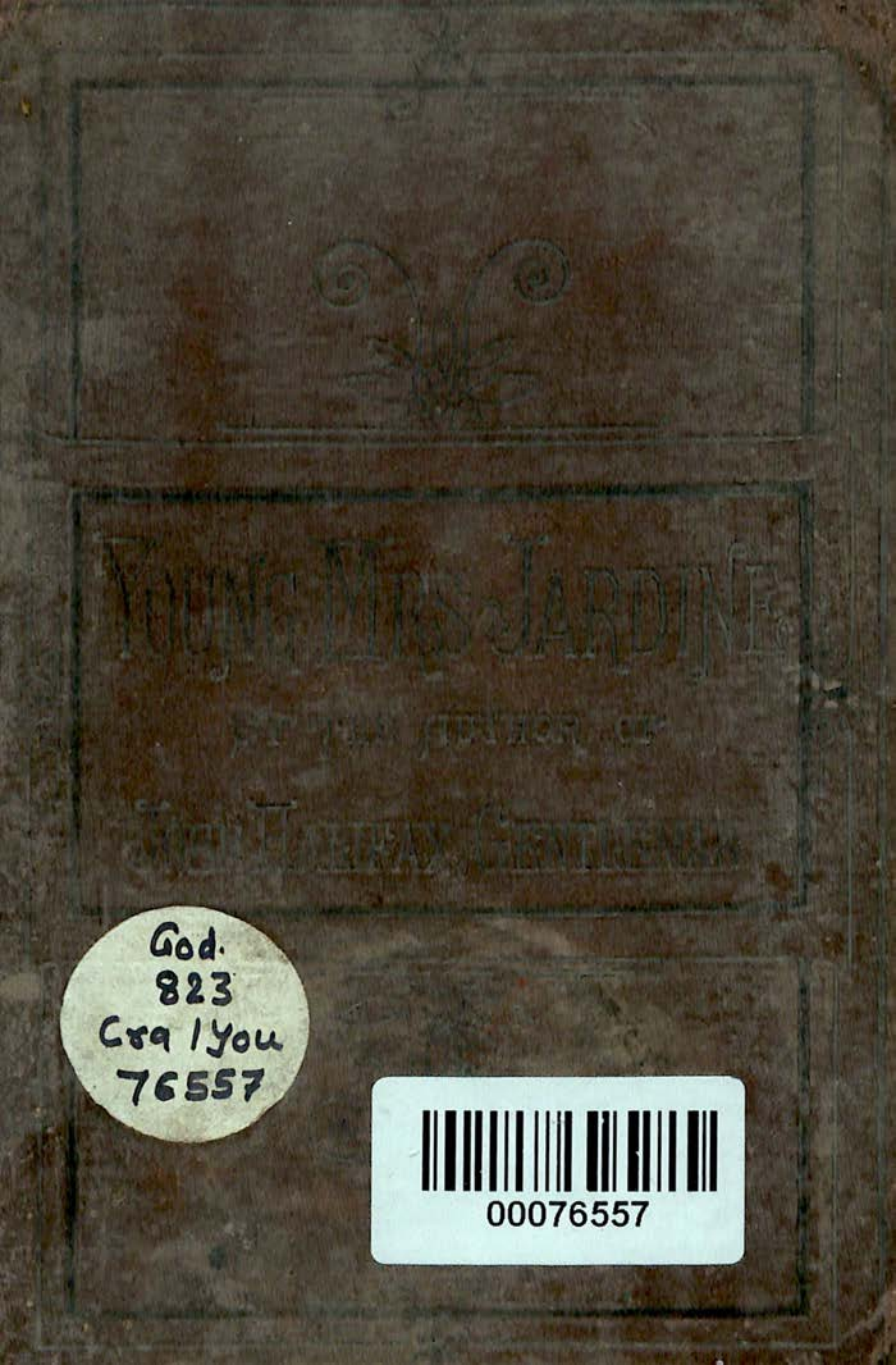


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YOUNG MRS. JARDINE.

VOL. I.

YOUNG MRS. JARDINE.

BY

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THE AUTHOR OF

"JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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YOUNG MRS. JARDINE.

CHAPTER I.

An only Son.

"I THINK, mother, I will go abroad after all!"

He who said this, suddenly and just a trifle sharply, had been sitting reading at the farthest end of a very handsome, not to say gorgeous, drawing-room, where a group of four ladies, whose clothes well matched the apartment, sat conversing. For I have no doubt they would have

called their talk "conversation"—of a highly interesting and improving kind.

The young fellow in the distance, however, did not seem to find it so. He was at that age when men are very critical of women, especially of their mothers and sisters, unless these happen to be sufficiently beautiful ideals to remain such unto son and brother from the cradle to the grave: an exceptional happiness which befalls few; and it had not befallen Roderick Jardine.

The stout lady who, the instant he spoke, pricked up her ears with a cheerful, "Eh, my dear?" was (eccentric Nature will sometimes have it so) very unlike this, her youngest child and only son—as unlike as it was possible for mother and son

to be. Light and dark, fat and lean, large-boned and slender, phlegmatic and nervous—they came of two diametrically opposite types, physically and mentally. Morally—yes, there was similarity there; for Mrs. Jardine was a good woman, and Roderick was, as she ceaselessly declared, being very outspoken as to her feelings, the best of sons, though he was a little "peculiar," like his poor dear father, of whom he was the very image.

This was true. Her three daughters—now married and settled, except the last, who was just about to be—all took after herself. Not her present self, perhaps, but the comely lassie she must have been once—fair-haired, round-cheeked, with a wide mouth and slightly projecting teeth

—though possessing sufficient good looks to be a belle in Richerden. Roderick alone "favoured" the other side of the house—the tall, dark, rather sad-looking father, who came of old Highland blood, and not being in business, like most of the Richerden folk, had led a rather retired life, keeping himself very much in the background, even amidst his own family. Nobody really knew him, or thought much of him, until he died, which event happened just before his son went to college.

Since then his widow had gradually blossomed out into great splendour; married her two daughters, taken her independent place in society, Richerden society, as a woman—I beg pardon, a lady—ought to do, who has a large fortune, a fine

family, and a great capacity for managing both. People had said that she managed her husband: but those who knew Mr. Jardine questioned this. Gentle as he was, he was not exactly a man to be "managed" by anybody.

"What were you saying, Rody, my lamb?"

Now, if there was a pet name the young fellow disliked, it was his childish diminutive of "Rody." And no man of five-and-twenty is altogether pleased at being called "a lamb."

"Can you spare two minutes from that very delightful conversation of yours to listen to me, mother?"

"Ou ay, my dear."

Roderick winced a little. "Wouldn't

'yes' do as well as 'ou ay'? But never mind, it doesn't matter, mother dear," added he, with a sigh, more of weariness than impatience.

There are so many things in family life which people never ought to mind, and right-thinking people try to persuade themselves they do not mind. But of all the small sufferings of existence there are few more trying than a continual sense, or dread, of being "rubbed up the wrong way" by somebody whom you are bound to love, nay, do love—in a sort of tender apologetic fashion—that affection without sympathy which becomes at times an actual anguish, instead of a rest and a delight. To conscientious people this is always a sad position, especially when it

unluckily happens to parents and children, who did not choose one another, and yet are bound to put up with one another to the last extremity of endurance.

"Honour thy father and thy mother," is a command nobody doubts. "*Love* thy father and thy mother," is a different thing, for love cannot be commanded. Roderick did love his mother, deeply and sincerely; but they were so exceedingly unlike by nature that only her extreme warm-heartedness and his strong sense of duty kept them from drifting asunder—and did not prevent his shutting himself up in a hopeless panoply of gentle reserve, as his father had done before him. For he and his father had been all in all to each other. The world had never looked

the same to Roderick since Mr. Jardine died.

I should like to describe Roderick Jardine as he stood reflected in the huge mirror—the drawing-room seemed all mirrors and gilding, with a few pictures stuck in between, large "furniture pictures," as I once heard them described by an Edinburgh upholsterer who was in the habit of providing such for the wealthy inhabitants of Richerden. Roderick was not a "furniture picture," but more like a Vandyck portrait—tall, dark-skinned, aquiline-featured; the true Celtic type as distinguished from the Lowland Scot. He had also slender, well-shaped hands and feet—another Celtic peculiarity—and dark eyes, which practical people might denounce as

"dreamy." A long, soft, black beard, which had never known razor, completely hid his mouth; which fact had been a real comfort to him, as it is to many born with a sensitive and nervous temperament, which it is the effort of their lives to overcome, or at any rate to conceal.

Such was this young man—not at all a young man of the period, since he neither smoked nor drank, betted nor talked slang. Yet that he was really a man, the other "men" of his college had pretty well found out by this time. Quiet-mannered and refined-looking as he was, nobody attempted either to tyrannize over him, or to take a liberty with him—not even his own mother.

"Rody, my boy," said she, coming to

him half deprecatingly, "were you saying you wished to go abroad? It's late in the year, to be sure, but I'll not hinder you. Only you must promise me not to be climbing up Alps and tumbling into glaciers." *Glaziers*, she called them; and her voice had the high-pitched shrillness which Richerden ladies seldom quite get out of, even when they fancy they have merged their native accent in the purest of English. "Wherever you go, remember you must be back in time for Isabella's marriage."

"Certainly—and, mother, don't be afraid of my tumbling into a glacier, or of an avalanche tumbling down upon me. I shall only see the Alps at a distance. At this time of year one must content one's self with towns."

"That's hard, laddie, when you are so fond of the country. But do as you like —do as you like, only don't forget the marriage. You will have to give away the bride, Rody.—Ah! your poor father!"

The widow's eyes filled with tears. If she had not understood her husband, she had loved him—and more perhaps after his death than before it.

"Girls, for all your persuasions, I would never have put off my black gowns if it hadna been for Bella's marriage. I hope people will not think I am showing ony disrespect to poor dear Mr. Jardine," added she, relapsing, as she always did in emotion, to the broad speech of her youth, now toned down into an accent just a degree stronger than that of her daughters.

"Mamma, nobody could ever imagine you forget papa," said the eldest, with a glance at the only remembrance left of him —a mere photograph—for "papa" had always refused to be painted, though likenesses of his wife and daughters, in startling costumes and varied attitudes, adorned the room.

The portrait stood, scarcely more silent than he had been in life, regarding his affectionate and loquacious household; a grave, stately Highland gentleman—every inch a gentleman. How he came to marry into the Paterson family was always a mystery, and remained so. Not for money certainly; he had a small patrimony of his own, and was, besides, a man who cared little for wealth, having amidst his wife's

luxurious style of living maintained the very simplest tastes, so simple that she, with her love of show, had been often aggravated thereby. Nor was it a marriage for position; his was much higher, socially, than hers. Could it have been for love? Certainly, during all the long years of their married life, he had never given her, or the world, reason to suppose that he did not love her. At last he died, and the secret, if secret there were, died with him. It was best so.

"You may think thus, girls, but Rody would not, I am sure," replied the mother, in a complaining voice. "Rody always thinks different from us all."

"Mother," said Roderick, with that look in his eyes which was so like his father's—

sad, tender, half-reproachful, and yet with a sweet appealingness, as if so long used to be misunderstood that he had learned to pardon it and pass it by—"mother, indeed I see no objection to your dress; and, if you would like me to stay at home, I will. I have done with Cambridge, you know, unless I cared to go in for a fellowship, which I do not. Shall I put off going abroad till spring, and we will then go together, you and I, to Italy, Greece, Egypt, perhaps even ending with Jerusalem?"

"Oh, preserve us! such a journey would kill me. Fancy me on the back of a camel, crossing the desert, and not getting anything to drink—not even cold water, though I don't like water, even your poor father

could never persuade me to it, you know. Nothing like a good glass of sherry, or even a wee drap toddy. I beg your pardon, my dear boy. I know it vexes you that your mother does not give in to your odd ideas. But never mind, Rody. Go where you will, and do what you like; only take care of yourself, and don't forget your old mother."

He was not likely, while there was that sweet expression, "the kind look that's in her e'e," as Burns puts it, implying the strong personal devotion which is to men in all relations of life most alluring, and, as in this case, makes amends for many contrary things; things absolutely inevitable, as the son often said to himself; and tried to think of his mother's early

education, or no education; nay, to remember as kindly as he could the old grandfather, once a working blacksmith, who had made such heaps of money in the iron line that his only child was able to marry a gentleman and become a lady.

But old Paterson remained exactly as he was. All his horses and carriages, his splendid house and magnificent dinners, could never make him anything but honest Sandy Paterson, well-meaning and kindly, but utterly uneducated, boastful, imperious, coarse of speech and manner, with an extreme delight in good eating, and—must it be confessed? only nobody minded it much at Richerden—good drinking.

Nevertheless the old fellow had his fine points, and his grandson knew them; but,

now that he was gone, Roderick never spoke more of him than was quite necessary. It was not unnatural. Reverence, like affection, does not come by instinct, or with blood; and there is a vast difference in one's respect for the man who has made himself, and the man who has only made his money.

I am playing chorus to my story in a most digressive way, but it was necessary. Beginning a tale is like entering a family. Some households express themselves so potently that in the first half-hour the visitor is acquainted with all their characters and ways; in others the under-currents run so strong that it takes weeks to find all out, and be able to form a fair estimate of persons and things. Had I described

literally, without comment, the scene in Mrs. Jardine's drawing-room, it would have conveyed an utterly false impression, as false as that we sometimes carry away from many a house, and which unconscientious writers are tempted to make amusing stories out of. It is so easy to laugh at follies, to mock at weaknesses, to condone agreeable sins; but to trace the root of these things, and to believe that all our neighbours are, if occasionally worse, often a good deal better than we suppose them, is quite another matter.

This is why, instead of letting the Jardines speak for themselves, I have at first spoken for them: but there is no need to do it any more.

"Well, we'll talk the matter over another

time," cried Roderick, who saw looming in the horizon that cloud of "conversation" under the shadow of which he had often shivered, when his clever mother and somewhat feebler sisters discussed a thing for hours together in every conceivable shape, and came to no conclusion after all. "At this moment I'm busy—I mean, I—I have an engagement. Good-bye, everybody. I'll be back at dinner-time."

"A little before dinner-time, please, my dear. Remember we have company—twenty at least—a regular dinner-party."

"Oh! yes, a 'meeting of creditors,' as my father used to call it," said the young fellow, somewhat bitterly. "No fear, mother; I'll be back in time, and do my duty to all the old fogies."

"They're not old fogies; there are some as nice girls as you could wish to see, if you'd only look at them, Roderick," said Bella, who, going to be married herself, quite lamented that her only brother seemed determined against matrimony.

"Well, I will, Bell, I promise you, only let me go now." And snatching up his hat —a Glengarry bonnet which he persisted in wearing, though his sisters told him it made him look like the Highland porters at the quay—he fairly ran away.

CHAPTER II.

At the Turn of the Tide.

ONCE out of the house, Roderick began again to breathe—if one could be said to breathe in that dense and murky atmosphere which hangs over Richerden, with very exceptional intervals, from October till March. And he had become used to English skies, English views and ways, the stately surroundings and old-world quiet of English university life. Richerden, with its oppressive atmosphere,

its dirty, noisy streets, where rich vulgarity and squalid poverty so closely alternated, was becoming to him not merely repellent, but obnoxious. He felt he should soon begin to hate it, long familiar as it was, with the fierce hatred of youth, which cannot see the other side of things, nor believe that to everything there is, there must be, two sides.

Rapidly the young fellow walked on through park and square, through street and wynd, or "vennel," as such dreary dens are often called here; shrinking from and detesting alike the poverty and the riches, the splendour and the rags. It began to rain heavily, but he heeded not. Though brought up in luxury, he was not luxurious by nature, could stand a good

deal of hardship, and had a young man's instinctive pride in "roughing it." Still "an even down-pour," as his mother would have called it, is not an agreeable thing; and as in reality his only "engagement" was with himself, whose company he felt free to enjoy as much as anybody else's, he stopped his walk and turned into a railway station, where at least he could sit down quietly and read his letters, which he had snatched up from the hall table on going out.

But having no very interesting correspondence—for he had left behind at Cambridge few intimates and no duns, also being, I fear, of a rather dilatory turn of mind, and given to the bad system of *laissez-aller*—Roderick left the letters un-

opened in his pocket, and sat idly watching the passengers gather for a train just about to start.

The town—or city, its inhabitants call it—of Richerden, has one great merit: it is a capital place to get away from. Trains at all hours and in every direction will carry you from it into as glorious a region as you need wish to see on this side Paradise—nay, I have sometimes thought Paradise itself may be a little like it. Roderick had done the same in his childhood, always associating it with the land of Beulah, the "everlasting hills," and the river spoken of in Revelation, as "flowing from the throne of God."

His young imagination, materialising and yet idealising everything, could not

imagine aught more beautiful than this river and those hills, as they looked sometimes, and had looked ever since he could remember. When a mere baby, old enough to escape his nurse, but still small enough to be carried in the father's arms, he had often been taken by that tender father, in boat or train, for a day's holiday together. How they had enjoyed it! hiding themselves in heathery solitudes, by silent glens and merry burn-sides, dining off oat-cakes and milk, bought at some cottage, or bread and cheese, carried in the paternal pocket, the taste of which seemed more delicious than all the grand dinners eaten now-a-days.

Afterwards, when Roderick grew to be a big boy, it was just the same, only, instead

of playfellows, they were companions—his father and he; for there was between them that which is the root of the only true and permanent relation between parent and child—entire respect on both sides. Mr. Jardine had the rare quality of not only loving but *respecting* childhood—its innocence, its keen sense of justice, its passionate and yet sensitive affections. In all their intercourse Roderick could call to mind no instance of his father having been unkind, or, worse, unfair to him. Their life together had been one of entire confidence and pure delight from beginning to end.

Too soon had come the end—the cruel blank: and though, in the strong interests of his college life, he had somehow got

over it, and felt no longer a boy but a man, still, *On revient toujours à ses premiers amours.* So sighed this sentimental fellow of five-and-twenty; and thought when he was five-and-seventy the sight of the river and the hills would be dear and delicious still. And when he heard the guard calling out the name of a place where he and his father had spent many a happy day, on a sudden impulse he sprang into the train without a ticket ("just like Rody, silly fellow," they would have said at home), and was borne away.

Away, out of the smoke and fog and soaking rain; away, mile after mile along the shore of the gradually widening river, till the hills began to show their distant outlines, vivid and lovely as mountains

always look after rain, especially in October. Nowhere is there such heavenly clearness, such spiritualised sunshine, such delicate and delicious colouring of earth and sky, as is often seen in these regions during the month of October. It felt to Roderick, who, after the long vacation, had patiently shut himself up with his mother and sisters at Richerden for weeks, like coming out of this world into the next —that heavenly country to which, consciously or unconsciously, we all look for the healing of many mortal woes.

He had none, though he often thought he had: but he was of that sensitive and poetic temperament which rather enjoys sadness—in the distance. As he swept along in the train, and, quitting it, started

on an old familiar walk, along high cliffs which gave him a view of the country—land and sea—for many lovely miles, Roderick's heart was very full.

Not only of his father, but of himself and his own future, which lay before him like a map; the map of an untravelled country—untravelled, but yet not undiscovered, for there were in it more certainties than lie in the lot of many young men of his age. He knew he would be well off, even rich; would never need to earn his bread unless he wished so to do; and would always be able to indulge any pleasant tastes, of which he had many; being, though not exactly a genius, of that appreciative nature which is next door to genius, and, combined with hard work,

often does duty for it, not unsuccessfully.

Also, he could marry as early as he liked, the only difficulty being to find and choose the "fair and inexpressive She," who had not as yet expressed herself in any way. The queen of his soul was yet *in nubibus.* He had never in the least compromised himself with any of the young ladies he met. Indeed, he found them all too much of "young ladies" and too little of women for his taste, and so was as perfectly fancy-free as any young man can be who has an ideal mistress clearly defined and painted in his head, to whom he is ready to bring all the devotion of his heart, if only he is lucky enough to find her.

Towards this unknown damsel he felt

something like Endymion on Latmos' top before the moonrise, and had already painted several ideal portraits of her in oil and water-colour, and written a good many sonnets to her; but, fortunately for himself and the world, neither portraits nor sonnets had ever been exhibited or published. Nevertheless, alternating with the dear remembrance of his father, which hallowed every beautiful thing that they had shared together, was this dream of a lady—his future wife—whose sweet companionship was to perfect all life for him. What he was to do for her, I am afraid, never entered his mind. The whole thing was to be pure felicity—his felicity, of course. As to hers, *cela va sans dire* (Roderick liked French phrases, and was

rather proud of his familiarity with the language, acquired through several walking tours in Normandy and Brittany), of course she would be happy—with him for her husband!

Poor fellow! so young, so ignorant of life and its burdens. Yet he thought himself both wise and old, and felt his burden very heavy indeed, and himself a most unfortunate fellow, on being obliged to go back to that "meeting of creditors" which he detested.

"But I'll enjoy myself here to the very last minute," thought he, and sat down on a heather bush—for on that high ground everything looked as dry as if it never had rained, and never would rain again, till the next time, which would probably be with-

in twenty-four hours. Wrapping his plaid about him, he felt perfectly happy. That lovely outline of hills—he must just put it down; so, hunting in his pocket for the pencil that was always a-missing, he turned out the letters which he had crammed in there, and looked them over.

None attracted him, except a black-edged one; which, opened, he found was one of the "intimations" of death, customary in Scotland, acquainting him that there had died "at Blackhall, aged sixty-nine, Miss Silence Jardine."

Silence Jardine! Surely a relation. Who could she be? For he had understood that his father and he were the last of their family.

However, thinking a minute, he remem-

bered that in the business arrangements after his father's death, which, he being under age, had been managed entirely by his mother, she had told him that Blackhall, the ancestral property, "a queer, tumble-down place, which nobody would care for," was to be inhabited as long as she liked, by Miss Jardine, a second cousin. This must be she who had now died.

"I wonder, ought I to go to her funeral?" However, consulting the letter, which had travelled to Cambridge and back, he found this was impossible. She must have "slept with her fathers" for some days already. "Poor Cousin Silence! What a queer name, by-the-bye. I wonder what she was like, or if I ever saw her?"

And then, by a sudden flash of memory, he recalled a circumstance which in the confusion and anguish of the time had entirely slipped away—how, not many hours before his father died, there had crept into the sick-room a lady; an old lady, nearly as old as Mr. Jardine, and curiously like him. At sight of her a wonderful brightness had come into the dying face. "Cousin Silence?" "Yes, Henry," was all they said, but she knelt beside him; and they kissed one another, and he lay looking at her till the last gleam of consciousness faded away. After that—for he did not actually die for some hours—she sat beside Mrs. Jardine, watching him till the end. And after the end Roderick remembered she had taken his

mother out of the room, and comforted her, staying a little while longer, and then leaving; no one thinking or speaking much about her, either at the time or afterwards.

Now, recollecting his father's look, and here, too, the whole story, or possible story, presented itself to the imaginative young man in colours vivid as life, and tender as death alone can make them. And when, carelessly opening another letter he found it was from the lawyer of this same Miss Jardine, stating that she had left him —"Roderick Henry Jardine, her second cousin once removed"—the whole of her small property, as also a diamond ring "which his father gave me many years ago," he was deeply touched.

"I wish I had known her. I wish I had had a chance of being good to her—poor Cousin Silence!" thought he.

And as he sat watching "the light of the dying day," which died so peacefully, so gloriously over the western hills, he, with his life just begun, pondered over the two lives now ended, the mystery of which he guessed at, but never could know, except that they were safely ended.

Doubtless, he was rather a sentimental fellow, this Roderick Jardine; and there are many fellows of his age, entirely without sentiment, very good in their way. Still they are the sort of young fellows that some people—and, I own, this present writer—would not very much care for.

When the sun set, going down like a

ball of fire which dyed the river all crimson, and the sudden grey chill of an October twilight came on, Roderick started up, a little ashamed of himself, and still more ashamed when he found he had entirely neglected to ask the time of the return train to Richerden.

"Just like me, mother will say!" and half laughing, but vexed, for it always vexed him to vex his mother, he tore along as fast as his long legs could carry him to the railway-station. The train was just going, and it was at the risk of his life—to say nothing of a penalty of forty shillings—that this foolish young fellow contrived to leap into it, breathless, exhausted, having nearly killed himself in his endeavour to "do his duty."

So he represented to himself, at least, and felt a most tremendous martyr all the way to Richerden. It did not occur to him that simply looking at his watch and the time-table would have saved all. But at his age we are so apt to overlook the little things on which, like the coral islands of the South Sea ocean, our lives are built. How far we build them ourselves, or Fate builds for us, God only knows.

Tearing up in a cab to his own door (or rather his mother's—he already began slightly to feel the difference), ringing as if he thought the house was on fire, and being met by the imperturbable butler with the information, "Yes, sir; dinner is served: Mrs. Jardine waited half an hour,

and then asked Mr. Thomson to take the foot of the table"—all this did not contribute to Roderick's placidity of spirit. When he at last walked into that blaze of gaslight—that dazzle of crystal and plate—that strong aroma of dainty dishes and excellent wines, and clatter of conversation, which make up a Richerden dinner-party, he was not in the best frame of mind to enjoy the same.

During his father's lifetime these entertainments had been limited; but since, his mother had gradually fallen into the ways of her neighbours, and taken great pride in surpassing them all. She herself, sitting at the head of her very handsomely spread table, looked gorgeously hospitable, beaming all over with satisfaction, and

talking in her somewhat loud but good-natured tones to everybody around her.

Large, comely; richly, if not quite elegantly dressed; her broad fair face always a-smile, and her "lint-white locks," with not a grey thread in them—you could not help liking this warm-hearted, good-natured woman, though you might not have wished her for a mother, or even a mother-in-law.

She was so busy talking, and the silver-gilt epergne was such an effectual barrier between the upper and lower ends of the table, that she never noticed how her son-in-law elect quitted his place and her son slipped into it, till the deed was done. Then Roderick might have received a good hearty scolding, not undeserved, had

not something in him—was it his father's look?—repressed the ebullition. She merely said, "Oh, my son is there, I see! Better late than never." And the dinner went on.

Roderick, conscience-stung, which he was rather apt to be, set himself to talk as politely as possible to his mother's guests—the "creditors" to whom she owed a dinner, and felt bound to give an equally grand one in return—nay, a grander, if possible.

Hers certainly was a magnificent "spread," and she watched its progress with undisguised satisfaction. Course after course succeeded each other. There was set before the company about six times as much as they could possibly eat,

and ten times as much as they ought to drink, though they did their very best to do both. What else could they do, when everything to tempt appetite and destroy health was lavished upon them with a cruel kindness worthy of Heliogabalus?

Young Jardine, who was by no means an ascetic, and had the wholesome enjoyment of youth in all things reasonably to be enjoyed, yet felt, though he had been used to them all his life, that there was something in these feasts which jarred upon him extremely—more and more the older he grew. They were not given from hospitality—it was merely paying a debt owed: nor for friendliness—there was scarcely a person at table of whom he had not heard his mother and sisters speak

slightingly, mockingly, even contemptuously at times: nor for social and intellectual companionship, since the talk was of the most vapid description, mere gossip, chit-chat, or badinage.

Roderick, who was unfortunately a young man with an ideal, a sense of right, of fitness, of beauty, born in him, and also put into him through constant association with that dear father, who had died with his ideal unfulfilled—poor Roderick sat at the end of this uncongenial board, feeling, not so much like a death's-head at the banquet, as a living man among death's-heads. For what a death in life it must be—an existence whose sole aim was good eating and drinking, splendid horses, and elegant clothes! Not that these things are bad—

in moderation—and with something higher beyond. But with nothing beyond?

The young fellow—full of hope and aspiration, with a keen, intelligent enjoyment of life, schemes for making the very best out of it, and yet not wasting it; liking to be happy, and yet liking to make his fellow-creatures happy too, so that he might leave the world better than he found it—felt, at the end of that luxurious dinner, as if he had been feeding for the last two hours on Dead-Sea apples.

When, the ladies having retired, he still had to keep his place and "pass the bottle"—which he loathed—to elderly gentlemen, ay, and young ones too, who evidently did *not* loathe it—listening meanwhile to talk in which, whether it

was his own fault or not, he could not get up the smallest interest, this young Cantab, who for three years had lived in what was a little better atmosphere than that of Richerden—socially as well as physically—was a good deal to be pitied.

So was his mother too, when, having succeeded in luring the gentlemen upstairs, he—her only son—went and hid himself in the back drawing-room and "sulked," as he overheard her say, lamenting over him as a black sheep, in the loudest of whispers, to a lady he particularly disliked.

But it was not sulking, for he had his father's sweet temper. It was only the utter weariness of spirit which in uncongenial circumstances comes over the young as well as the old—oftener the young than

the old, since these latter see beyond it; the former never do. To them their first despair is a despair eternal.

"How in the world shall I bear this sort of thing!"

Roderick could give it no more definite name. Outwardly, his family life was quite satisfactory—nay, most enviable. He had all this world's good things at his feet—a mother devoted to him, and whom he loved very sincerely: his sisters, too, though he saw little of them, they were so engrossed in their own affairs, were good and kind. Why was it that home was not home? that he felt infinitely more solitary, more dull, in this gay house than in his two poky college-rooms? that in his pleasant and affectionate family he was regarded

—and knew it—something like Andersen's "Ugly Duck," whom every other duckling swims away from, and even the mother mourns over and scolds at?

While smiling over the comparison, he blushed; for he was not a conceited fellow, and had no idea of ever turning out to be a swan.

"But I wish they would leave me alone in some quiet corner of the duck-pond," thought he. "And still more I wish I could find a creature or two like myself to swim or fly with—wild ducks I suppose they must be! Oh! if I had any excuse for flying right away!"

And then, with the habit he had of passing over things at the time, and recurring to them afterwards, there came into his

mind a sentence in the letter from Miss Jardine's lawyer, explaining that in making her will she had said to him that her only other kindred were some distant cousins, living she believed in Switzerland, whom, if they were poor, she "left to Roderick's kindness."

"Capital idea! I'll go straight to Switzerland and find them. It would at least be something to do."

And the mere notion of this brightened up the young fellow's spirit, and warmed his heart—he was, I fear, but a foolish young Quixote after all: so that, when his mother called him to do civility to the departing guests, he came forward with an air of cheerfulness such as he had not worn all the evening. Ay, even when he

had to escort the most honoured guest to the very carriage-door, from an unsteadiness of gait, politely ascribed to gout, but which Roderick, with a contempt so sad to see in the young to the old, even when the old deserve it, soon perceived to be—something else.

"Mother," cried he, indignantly, as he returned to the drawing-room, where the two ladies stood on the hearthrug of their "banquet-hall deserted," hot, weary, a little cross, and not a little glad that "it was over"—"Mother, I wonder you let that old fellow enter your door! He has not an ounce of brains, and less of manners. Didn't you see he was drunk?"

"What an ugly, vulgar word! And to say it of Sir James, who holds such a good

position here, and is Mr. Thomson's father, too! Rody, I'm ashamed of you!"

"And Bella is more than ashamed—angry. Oh! Bell," and with a sudden sense of brotherly tenderness, half regret, half compunction, he laid his hand on her shoulder, "have you thoroughly considered this marriage? Are you quite sure of the young man himself? These things run in families. Suppose he should ever turn out a drunkard—like his father!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Bella, sharply. "And even if Sir James does enjoy his glass—why, so do many other gentlemen. It isn't like a common man, you know, who never knows when to stop. Now Sir James does. He is not 'drunk,' as you call it, only 'merry.'"

"Roderick," said his mother—and when she gave him his full name he knew she was seriously displeased—"the Thomsons are one of the first families in Richerden, and live in the best style. Isabella is making the most satisfactory marriage of all her sisters, and I desire you will not say one word against it."

"Very well, mother." And, with a hopeless sigh, Roderick changed the conversation.

He had the one weak point of gentle natures—he could not endure strife—would do almost anything for peace's sake. Often he let a thing pass—a matter of taste, sometimes almost of principle—rather than hold his own and fight it out. Only when driven to extremity could he really turn at

bay, like a wild stag of the forest, and show his sharp horns.

"Mother, have you thought over what I said this morning about going to Switzerland?" asked he, impelled by the sad longing of much-worried people—to run away. "Because since then I have found an added reason for my journey." And he gave her the two letters which had come on from Cambridge. "I suppose you had not heard of Miss Jardine's death, or you would have put off the dinner-party?"

"Why so? She was only a poor relation. Nobody knew anything about her here. Her death was not even put in the newspapers."

"Then you did know of it? But, of course, one could not mourn for a person

whose death was not important enough to be put in the newspaper."

Mrs. Jardine looked puzzled, as she often did when her gentle-speaking "lad" spoke in that way; she could not make out whether he was in jest or in earnest.

"My dear, I don't see why we should notice the death of Cousin Silence. It would be very inconvenient just at the wedding. She was a very good woman, no doubt; but she was only your father's second cousin, though he was always most kind to her, and let her occupy his house at Blackhall for years. Besides, she was a great invalid, though she never made much fuss about it, and hardly ever stirred from her own fireside. When I got the 'intimation' I couldn't help thinking she was well away."

"Yes, well away," said the young man; and, with a young man's chivalric tenderness, he henceforth buried in his deepest heart this dear dead woman, whom he had seen his dying father kiss. But he did not name her again to his mother, or to anybody.

It was quite late that night before he succeeded in explaining to Mrs. Jardine—or in making her at all comprehend the necessity of it—his wish to start off at once to Switzerland in search of these distant relatives, who might be poor, and therefore would have much more right to Miss Jardine's little property than he had.

"I don't see that at all, Rody. She left it to you, and I'm sure it was very kind of her, though you will never want money."

"And they may."

"But why can't you inquire about them—send out a confidential clerk, for instance?"

"That would be a much more business-like proceeding, I allow, mother, and you are the best woman of business imaginable; I know that. But still, 'If you want a thing done, go yourself. If you don't care about it, send.' Was not that my grandfather's maxim? And it generally succeeded."

"Ah! you're a coaxing laddie," said Mrs. Jardine, one of whose fine qualities was an affectionate pride in her clever, low-born father. "Well, go, if you like. But it's just a wild-goose chase; that's what I call it."

"So do I, mother. Only I'm not the hunter; I'm the wild goose, and I want to take a good long flight, and stretch my wings. Then I'll come back as tame as possible, and settle down in the dullest and smoothest of ponds."

"Oh! I wish you would settle down," said the mother, earnestly. "There's plenty of girls in Richerden—nice girls, too, the Miss Bannermans and Miss Fergusons, and little Maggie Marjoribanks, that's *so* fond of you!"

"Don't tell me that, mother; you ought not,"—and the young fellow blushed all over his face. "It isn't fair to the girl, or to me. She's a very charming girl, of course, as she has got heaps of money"—again the sarcastic ring in his voice, too

sarcastic for so young a man; "but you know I don't care a pin for Maggie Marjoribanks, or any of Bella's fine friends. They're all too much young ladies for me."

"You don't mean to say you want a young person?" answered Bella, satirically. "A dressmaker, perhaps, or a governess, or somebody that earns her own living. Mamma, take care!"

"I don't want anybody. I want to be free. I have plenty to do, and to enjoy also, before I 'settle down,' as you call it. Can't you leave me alone, to manage my own affairs?"

"Ah! do let the poor boy alone!" cried Mrs. Jardine, yawning. "Don't let us sit up talking any longer. Rody, my dear,

go where you like, do as you like; please yourself, and you'll please me."

"I have no doubt he will please himself, mamma," added Bella, who dearly liked to have the last word. "And I can imagine the sort of wife he is sure to bring home some day."

"Can you?" said Roderick, biting his lips. "At any rate, she will not resemble Maggie Marjoribanks, or you." And then his conscience smote him for the sharp words—he had such a tender conscience always! "Oh, do let me go away, mother!" with almost piteous entreaty. "Perhaps I may come back a better fellow, so that you have not always to find fault with me, as seems the case now. But I don't mean any harm. Really, the de'il is not as black

as he's painted—by his sisters especially."

"Black, my son?" said Mrs. Jardine, fondly, as he bade her good night, and kissed her—he was not too proud to kiss his mother every night and morning still. "You're just the very best son that ever mother had, and so I tell everybody."

"I wish you didn't, mother dear; but I suppose you can't help it." And so, half laughing, yet slightly sore at heart, Roderick sprang upstairs—three stairs at a time—to his own bed-room, where at least he could shut out everybody and everything, and "his thoughts call home" to the fancies and crotchets that pleased him best.

It was a small room, almost in the roof: but he had chosen it, much to his family's

surprise and remonstrance, as soon as they came to this grand new house, because from it, on very clear days, you could see right across the park and the suburbs of Richerden to the "blue hills far away," which are the unacknowledged blessing of that wealthy but unsanitary town. Now, in the still moonlight of midnight, with the early snow on their tops, they were plainly visible, if you only took the trouble to undraw the curtains and lower the gas.

Roderick, being a sentimental youth at best, did so, and it comforted him. The vexation of his spirit melted away bit by bit. These were, after all, such mere trifles to be vexed about, when all life, with its grand aims and large ambitions, lay before him—nay, in his very grasp.

Talk as they might, his womankind could do nothing. Even his mother had no real power over him. He was of age, and free to come and go as he chose.

As to money—well, it must be confessed, money was the last thing this young fellow ever thought about, or inquired into. He had a sufficient allowance, paid regularly, and spent honestly, though certainly spent, up to the very last halfpenny, and that was all he knew or cared about it. Blackhall, he understood, was now his own—rather a weight on his mind—and then there was Miss Jardine's touching bequest, just heard of.

In the quiet moonlight, looking at the dim white outline of the "everlasting hills," his mind went back to its musings

of a few hours back—over those two finished lives, the real history of which neither he nor anyone would ever know. It was all peace now.

He determined to go, the very next day, to visit Blackhall, which he had never yet seen, and knew little about, for his father rarely named it, though it had been the home of the Jardines for many generations. Also, they must have had a burial-place, for he had some recollection of his father having once expressed a wish to lie there, only his mother had overruled it in favour of the grand new cemetery on the outskirts of Richerden, where she had afterwards erected a beautiful white marble sarcophagus with an urn at the top. What matter? Henry Jardine

slept well. And far away, somewhere beyond those moonlight mountains—near the very places where they might have played together as children, or walked together as young people—slept also Cousin Silence.

But the waking? If it be possible that the life to come shall heal some of the wounds of this life—oh, the heavenly waking!

CHAPTER III.

All Things New.

RODERICK JARDINE was not, I hope, a worse young fellow than most others of his age, or less soft-hearted. Yet, when he had fairly bidden good-bye to his good, tearful mother—who, he knew well, would do anything in the world for him, except let him do what he felt was best for himself—this parting once over, he breathed more freely than he had done for many weeks. The fogs of Richerden

were behind him, and before him was *la belle France*, with its sunshiny climate, and its light-hearted people, who seem to take life so much easier than we do. He, with his Celtic blood, also liked to enjoy life; and, whenever he crossed the Channel, he felt, what Anglo-Saxons seldom do feel—for there is a great mystery in kinship of race—a hearty sympathy for that sweet French politeness, that bright open-air existence, with its simple feeding, its innocent amusements, above all, its kindly gaiety. His heart seemed to open at the first clatter of French tongues on Calais pier, the first gleam of clear French sunshine down the long, level, poplar-bordered roads, the first sight of those queer, heavy-looking carts, with the huge Norman

horses, and the blue-bloused Norman peasant stolidly following.

"How nice to be really in France again!" thought he, with a sigh of relief—happily, unheard by the good mother, driving in her splendid carriage to pay a series of calls in Richerden houses, as handsome and as dull as her own. "I wish I could stay here—at Amiens, perhaps—and spend the whole day in the lovely cathedral. But, I suppose, it is my duty to go right on to Switzerland."

"Duty" was a rather new idea in this young man's life, and he did not dislike it—just for a change. His "wild-goose chase" had resolved itself into a deliberate purpose, or as much so as was possible to his nature, and at his age. He had not

been to Blackhall—he hardly knew why, except that his mother had thrown a good many impediments in the way of the journey, so that, perceiving she did not like it, he gave it up. But he had had a long correspondence with Mr. Black, the old factor there, who knew all the family affairs.

From him Roderick discovered that there had been, half a century back, three branches of Jardines—represented by three orphaned children, Silence Jardine, Archibald Jardine, and Henry Jardine, his father. These, all second cousins, were brought up together at Blackhall. Thence Archibald had suddenly disappeared abroad, taking his little patrimony. After many years he was heard

of as a "pasteur" in some Swiss canton; no very great change, he having been intended for the Scotch church; and he was said to be married, with a family. But he had never revived acquaintance with either of his cousins, and what were his present circumstances, whether even he was alive or dead, nobody knew.

Still, Roderick had argued, to accept his own little inheritance till he knew his cousin needed nothing, was really impossible. And though Mrs. Jardine reasoned, on the other side, that the money was not Archibald Jardine's, except conditionally, and to search for him was like hunting for a needle in a hayrick, her more impulsive and romantic son decided that Archibald Jardine must be found, and he, Roderick,

was the man to find him. Nor was it so very impossible, seeing that Switzerland—Protestant Switzerland—is not such a very large extent of country, and the name was peculiar; also, by all accounts, the man himself was peculiar too—very clever, very eccentric, likely to have made his mark wherever he settled.

"I'll find him, mother, if he is to be found," Roderick had cried, considerably excited by the quest. It gave him, as he had said, something to do, and (as he did not say, being little given to self-examination) the pleasure was intensified by its being a kindly thing to do. "A few hundreds don't matter to me, and may matter to him. Besides, the thing amuses me."

For, either from caprice, folly, or a certain shyness lest they should discover feelings in him which they could not understand, and might only laugh at, he never pretended to his family that he had any interest in life beyond amusement. His sisters thought Roderick the most unpractical fellow alive; and his mother expressed the utmost astonishment to see him fulfil his duty in arranging all business matters connected with Miss Jardine's will; doing all that was necessary, and even a little more.

Was this, perhaps, because in so doing he had found something to interest him, and deeply too?—the secret of a life which, outside, appeared a mere invalid existence, idle and useless, but underneath was one

of the noblest and most pathetic lives the young man had ever dreamed of; wholly unselfish and self-devoted—busy, active, filled, up to the last, with thoughtful care for others; finally going home, out of the empty world—and not sorry to go home.

"I wonder," thought Roderick, as he looked at the diamond ring which, though it was a lady's ring, he determined always to wear till he could discover some fair lady to give it to. "I wonder if I shall ever find such a woman to love *me*—a second Silence Jardine?"

Ah, foolish fellow! it was always somebody's loving him that he thought about. He forgot that the great strength of the knights of old was that *they* loved, actively, not passively. They chose some noble

lady, worshipped and served her, fought for her, and won her. The man who has will to choose, courage to win, and faithfulness to keep, is almost unknown in modern chivalry. As rare, alas! is the woman who deserves to be thus adored.

Roderick sat meditating in this wise—not in the crowded Paris railway, but in the empty carriage between Dijon and Pontarlier—where, in the dim dawn of the winter morning, he found himself on the boundary of Switzerland, a country which he had never yet seen. And, spite of all his notion of "duty," he was conscious of a lurking pleasure in being thus forced by "business" to realize the dream of his life, and see the Alps for the first time.

As the sun rose and the morning bright-

ened—one of those glorious days of St. Martin's summer which make all mountainous regions look so lovely—Roderick felt himself growing strangely excited. The country was not unlike his native Scotland, only with the picturesque Swiss cottages dotted here and there. From either window he looked out on green hillsides and pleasant glens, with dancing burns at the bottom, just as if he had been at home.

"How my father would have liked this!" he said to himself, and sat on the arm of the carriage-seat, watching with the eagerness of a very boy—what was he but a boy still?—for the first glimpse of those "eternal snows" which travellers rave about, and painters paint, and poets sing of, and which he was half inclined to fear would

be a great "take in" after all—ay, even when he found himself dashing through the finest bit of railway journey he had ever experienced—the magnificent Val de Trâvers.

Everybody knows that Pass through the Jura mountains, where you dart in and out of about a dozen tunnels, catching between whiles gleams of the ravine, the wildest Roderick had ever seen, a hill-side sloping up to the very sky, one mass of trees—chiefly fir and oak—whose vivid greens and yellows glowed in the clear sunshine; and a river boiling below, all spray and foam, whirling round grey rocks in frantic eddies, and with a noise that was heard even above the puffing locomotive—Nature battling with civilization, and almost winning in the fight.

Yet how grand it was!—every moment presenting a new picture, all the finer, perhaps, that it was so momentary. Roderick could hardly draw his breath for pleasure, and for the vague sense that we have in youth of "something going to happen"—some strange, sweet lifting of the curtain of the future, some passionate entering into an unknown, delicious world.

And when gradually the scene grew tamer, the huge walls of the Pass seemed to lower, and the narrow glimpse of blue sky overhead to widen, his heart beat, his lips quivered; he strained his eyes to see everything that could be seen—above all, to catch the first glimpse of what he surely must be nearing—the lake of Neuchâtel.

Yes, there it was, no mistake about it;

a long, wide, calm blue water, like an inland sea; and beyond it, in an almost endless wavy line, every indentation of which was as perfect as if drawn with a pencil, rose, or rather lay—for they were too distant to be more than mere outlines in the horizon—the great white Alps.

Though he was quite alone—or rather because he was alone, or he would certainly not have made such a fool of himself—Roderick sprang to his feet with a cry of pleasure—pleasure so keen that it even made the tears come into his eyes. No such sight, visionary yet real, new yet infinitely beautiful, had ever yet burst upon his eyes; eyes so like his father's—dreamy, tender, passionate, intense—eyes which, from babyhood, had seemed to foretell the

whole story of the coming life. If his father—if anyone who loved him—could have seen them now, as he watched the scene before him, at once a revelation and a prophecy! Roderick could not say why, but he felt as a young man would feel at the first sight of the face of his first love.

But few young men have a first love, the thing having been already frittered away into half-a-dozen foolish fancies or flirtations, and fewer still have a love at first sight. So I doubt not Roderick will be much laughed at, as he was conscious he would have been at home. The one person who had never laughed at him, who despised no harmless bit of sentiment, and who hated nothing but what was mean and

base—his father—was away. Grown man as the son was, he gulped down a sob, almost like a girl's, to think of the face which, now, he would involuntarily have turned to, to read in it the reflection of his own delight—the dear face which on earth he should see no more.

Thus, with a sacred sadness that was scarcely pain, he found himself nearing the little town which he had often heard about and traced in maps; nay, he once remembered getting the "tawse" on his hand, because, being one of those gentle lads who can be very obstinate sometimes, he would persist in calling it "Neufchâtel," instead of "Neuchâtel." He had not laughed then; but he laughed now at the recollection. Long afterwards, how strange it all seemed!

The lovely day had faded a little; nevertheless, having settled himself at the hotel, Roderick started out again to see if his beloved Alps were still "découverts," though the "colorization," which the garçon informed him only happened sometimes, did not seem likely to happen this sunset. Still he got a map and tried to find out the outline of the mountains, from Mont Blanc at the one end to the Bernese Alps on the other, before they quite melted into mist, as they did soon melt, and the lake too. But he had seen them—seen the Alps, and he felt as if he had not been so happy for years.

He had to hive all his happiness for private consumption during four of the wettest of days. Never, even in his own

pluvious land, had Roderick seen such a deluge as that which shortly swept down upon the poor little town, hour after hour. It was useless to grumble or scold; so he sat, laughing at his misfortune, or at the hapless Neuchâtellerois who went meekly paddling through the flooded streets. Once or twice he himself sallied out, and took a melancholy wander by the lake-side, peering hopelessly into that abyss of grey mist beyond which had gleamed such a lovely vision; but he soon came back again, and lounged in the dreary salon, smothering under the close air of the heated Swiss stoves, trying to read a few stray volumes of the Tauchnitz Library, and to persuade himself he was not a very great fool for having visited Switzerland in November,

attempting vainly to do what any lawyer's clerk could have done equally well, perhaps better.

For he had only been able to catch one clue whereby he might find his cousin. Mr. Black, the Blackhall factor, a strong Free-church man, had taken some interest in a similar disruption in the Swiss Church, and in one of the controversial writers therein, a "professeur" or "pasteur," or both—the good man's ideas on the subject were very misty—at Neuchâtel. To this M. Reynier Roderick brought a letter of introduction; but on delivering it found the family were still at their summer retreat in the Jura mountains. So he decided to make the best of a bad business, and amuse himself till they came back.

He knew the language—that was one comfort—and he was not of the stolid Saxon temperament, which refuses to take in any new ideas, or to see any perfection in things to which it is unaccustomed. He was a true Celt, impressionable and flexible by nature, ready to love, quick to hate, until the experience of life should teach caution in the one and tolerance in the other. "The world will go hard with you, my boy," his father had sometimes said, half tenderly, half pensively; and Roderick, shaking his black curls, had only laughed, afraid of nothing.

Nor was he discouraged or afraid now. In fact, he rather enjoyed this dropping from the clouds—oh, what soaking clouds! —into a new place and new people. Not

so very new after all, for when, on Sunday morning, he followed the dripping multitude up the steep street which led to the Cathedral—now a Protestant Church—he found everything so like home that but for the language he could have imagined himself "sitting under" his mother's favourite minister at Richerden. Only when the psalm arose, to a quaint and beautiful tune, and it was a beautiful psalm too, for he read it out of his neighbour's book, beginning—

"Grand Dieu, nous te louons, nous t'adorons, Seigneur,"

it contrasted favourably with the nasal hymns which so tormented him in Scotland. It was sung not badly, especially by one pure, high soprano, a few seats behind, a voice so good that he vainly tried

to catch sight of the singer; and in its sweet musical French it seemed to express what he missed so often at home—the sense of cheerfulness in religion. To the last verse—

"Nous n'espérons, O Dieu, qu'en ta grande bonté :
Tu seul peux nous aider dans notre adversité,
Rendre nos jours heureux et notre âme contente,"

the invisible singer behind gave such a pathos that it went right to his heart. The young man, called often "irreligious" by his mother, because his religion lay very deep down, longed earnestly for those *jours heureux*, that *âme contente*, and wondered if by any means he could attain to the like—he, all alone, with nobody to help him to be good, hundreds ready to allure him to be bad.

It was a small thing, one of those trifling incidents which befall us all—only some of us note them and others do not; but long afterwards he remembered it with a strange solemnity, like a person who, believing he was walking his own way, on his own feet, finds out that hands unseen, unfelt, have been leading him all the while.

Plunging back through the muddy streets "home"—what a ridiculous word!—to the dreary hotel, Roderick made up his mind to give one day's more chance to the weather, and to the absent Professeur Reynier, upon whom, and his *famille charmante*, the garçon dilated enthusiastically; for everybody seemed to know everybody in this innocent little town. If, on the morrow, it did not cease raining, and some

token did not come in answer to his letter and card, Roderick resolved to change his quarters, and try "fresh woods and pastures new,"—take, in short, to pleasure instead of duty, and pursue the search after this vague distant cousin no more.

CHAPTER IV.

"*My Queen.*"

NEXT day, on rising, Roderick beheld a change! And such a change!

The mist had entirely lifted off from the lake. Its wide bosom lay, still grey, but motionless and clear in the soft dawn. And beyond, their intense purple sharply distinct against the bright amber of the sky, was the long line of Alps. Through one deep indentation, between the Jungfrau and the Fensterhorn, the sun was

slowly rising, dyeing the snows rose-colour, and then, as he mounted above the cleft, pouring a sudden stream of light right across the lake—that "golden path of rays" which always feels like a bridge whereon delivered souls might walk—they to us, or we to them—those that on earth we see no more.

Roderick, as he gazed, was conscious of the same sensation which had come over him a few days before—that intuition of approaching fate—bliss or bale, which by those who have it not is esteemed mere fancy, and supremely ridiculous; and even those who have it have need to be rather afraid of it, just as a very imaginative person would be less in fear of the ghosts he beheld than of the ghosts he created.

"*Absit omen,*" murmured Roderick, as, having stood in an ecstasy, watching the gorgeous sunrise, he saw it melt into common daylight, as all sunrises do, in November especially. A dull rainy mist began once more to gather on the distant peaks. "Another wet day after all. Richerden itself could not be worse than this. Shall I go home again?"

But it was so ignominious to go home, having done nothing, seen nothing, that he thought he would make an effort at least to get to Berne and back before the short day closed. And descending, beside his solitary plate at the dreary *table d'hôte* breakfast he found a letter, the daintiest, most politely-worded *billet*, inviting him, in the name of M. le Professeur and Madame

Reynier, to pass the evening at their house.

"Six o'clock, and a soirée! What simple folk they must be here!"

But, finding he could be back in time, he accepted the invitation in his very best French, and started off to the railway station on his little bit of solitary sight-seeing.

No one shared his carriage—abroad there is a saying that nobody travels first-class except fools and Englishmen—so he admired all alone the picturesque country which skirts the long chain of lakes; very comfortable, but just a trifle dull. Not that Roderick disliked his own company; on the contrary, he preferred it to that of most people he met—but he

had had so much of it lately. It would have been rather pleasant to have somebody to whom he could say that Berne was a most curious old town, with whom he could have thrown buns to the bears, those important personages, "rentiers" on their own account; still better, when inquiring his way to the Terrasse, and finding the view hopeless, the mountains being again "couverts," he had to content himself with admiring the river which flows below it, circling the pretty town like a tender arm. Still more would he have liked somebody, anybody, beside him, with whom he could lean over the low wall and argue about the sensations of the man on horseback who leaped down —heaven knows how many feet—without

being killed; and what sort of sermons he preached—since, the inscription says, he at once entered the Church, and was a minister in it for many years.

"Suppose I, Roderick Jardine, were to jump down now, just to feel a sensation, or create one—Folly!"

And laughing at himself, and his inordinate vexation at the dull grey day, the miserable mountains, the solitude, everything! he went to feed at a restaurant, and lounge away the time till the return train.

Just before it started, by a sudden impulse, hoping against hope, he walked back to the Terrasse, and turned a last look in the direction of the mountains. One instant—one wonderful, bewildering instant—and then—

"If, after death, I open my eyes in Paradise, I know, I feel, it will look like that."

Such was the thought which passed through Roderick's mind—the only thought, for every feeling was absorbed into mere gazing—drinking in through eyes and soul a vision, utterly undescribable to those who have never seen it.

The Jungfrau in the sunset, spiritualized by a clear amber glory till it resembles nothing earthly, only that New Jerusalem "coming down from heaven like a bride prepared for her husband"—Roderick gazed and gazed, almost out of himself with ecstasy, thinking of nothing, seeing nothing, though there was a little group beside him gazing too. But he never

noticed them, till, stepping backwards, he came against somebody, and said, "Pardon, madame"—then turned, and saw it was not madame at all—mademoiselle.

She had never observed him—not in the least. Her eyes too were fixed upon the mountains in entire absorption—large, calm, blue, almost English eyes. And her short, curly fair hair might have been English too. But when, at the second "Pardon," she turned, there was an unmistakable foreign grace in her slight acknowledgment. She and her companion, an older lady, exchanged a word or two, but it was French, spoken with the purest of accents. So, if Roderick had had any hope of finding a country-woman, it faded out at once.

Faded—as the lovely vision of the Jungfrau and Fensterhorn already had begun to fade. Yet still the little group stood silently gazing, in a common sympathy. Roderick never looked even at his young neighbour, until, suddenly turning, their eyes met. Both were full of tears:

> "At the first sight
> They have changed eyes."

People dispute this truth, and yet it is a truth—to some people, and under some circumstances.

Startled to a degree that almost annoyed him—bowing instinctively, and then blushing deeply to think that he had done so, that he had taken such a liberty with any stranger lady, Roderick hurried away, having indeed waited so long that his swift

young feet, and the happy tardiness of Swiss railways, alone saved him from losing his train, and the Reynier soirée.

"But I will come back to Berne to-morrow," thought he. "It is a far prettier town than Neuchâtel; and—I wonder if she is a Bernoise? I wonder if I shall ever see her face again?"

Just then—was it possible?—in the dim light a grey gown passed him, and slipped into a third-class carriage. And he had an impression that *she* wore a grey gown.

"Nonsense!" laughing at himself as he lounged back in his luxurious "wagon;" "a creature like that couldn't possibly travel third-class."

So he tried to forget her, and think only

of the Jungfrau; then, secondarily, of the means he must take to interest M. Reynier in his search for Archibald Jardine—in whom, it must be confessed, his own interest was fast dying out. Anything tedious, or dull, or unpleasant, was so new to him. He did not appreciate it at all.

The train being late, he had only just time to dart out, and fly to his hotel, to dress for the evening.

He was not a fop—this foolish young Roderick—but he was just a trifle of a dandy; that is, he liked to dress well, and was particular about minute points of costume. And when dressed, he was a goodly young fellow to look at. Even the garçon, who smiled secretly at his order-

ing a *voiture* for a *course* of a street's length to M. Reynier's, gave an approving glance to "*ce monsieur Anglais.*"

It is so much the fashion to make one's hero grumpy, middle-aged, boorish, plain —always snubbing the heroine, and all the more adored by her—that I quite hesitate to confess how, when Roderick descended from his most unnecessary equipage, in complete evening dress, with diamond studs and daintily-tinted gloves, he was the very opposite of this rather unpleasant personage. He had a fine face and a graceful figure; a bearing that was "every inch the gentleman"—and manners—well, he could not have said a harsh or discourteous word to a woman—any woman, high or low, ugly or pretty, young or old—for his

life! Thus he appeared as he entered the salon of M. le Professeur Reynier.

It was very dimly lighted; with shaded lamps, so that, at first, Roderick distinguished nothing; then he became aware of a grey-haired gentleman, a matronly lady, and a cloud of young people of different ages, down to quite small children; of a courteous and kindly reception, and of passing into a *salle à manger*, where was laid out a simple but abundant meal, corresponding to the "hungry tea" of Scotch habit. Everything, indeed, was extremely simple—but so pretty! from the shiny parquet floor to the tastefully decorated table, with its dainty china, flowers, and fruit. One missed a little the bright English fire; and the stove gave a certain

closeness to the room—a sense of warm darkness, which, however, was not unpleasant; there was a sort of mystery about it, and youth likes mystery. Roderick glanced round him at the party, evidently quite a family party. There was no occasion whatever for the diamond studs and light gloves, which he ardently wished he had never put on! But, true to his Celtic nature, he began to accommodate himself to circumstances.

He had wont to be conceited over his aptitude for foreign tongues, but when, after a brief pause, in deference to the English guest, conversation rolled back like a tide, he felt himself completely drowned in the flood of French—bright, lively, impulsive, energetic, as only French

talk can be—darting to and fro, scintillating, around and across the table; at which he sat like—like a stone, or an ass, he said to himself—unable to make out a single word!

By-and-by, however, things cleared a little. That sweet courtesy to the stranger which one always finds abroad, began to make the Babel intelligible; his host soon led him into conversation, and, seeing that no one present attempted a word of English, he tried to get over his own shyness, and do his best in French. Besides, he soon found the great antidote to shyness—self-forgetfulness. He became interested at once in this happy, merry family circle—elder sons and their wives, growing-up daughters, down to little boys and

girls. Evidently the old Professeur had his quiver full.

How he had managed to bring them up in this remote corner of the world, as it seemed to Roderick, and in comparative poverty, for the house was not even a house—Mrs. Jardine would have called it "a flat"—and the one servant who waited was quite a common peasant girl; how he had imparted to them all that intelligence and refinement, *bien instruits* as well as *bien élevés*, for they seemed to be as familiar with English literature as with their own, passed the young man's comprehension—the rich young man who had believed that money alone could do this.

It was an odd thing, a very odd thing: but, dropping down as if from the clouds,

upon this little town which a week ago was to him a mere dot on the map, he felt himself quite at home there—he a Cambridge man, and a man of fortune—more at home than he had done in Richerden society all his days. And when, re-entering the *salon*, he found there a few other guests, scarcely visible in the dim light, and was introduced expressly to a "Mees Somebody from Edimbourg," who responded, with painful blushes, in the broadest of Scotch accents, he heartily wished his own country people were—well, that they were all safe at home!

"And here, monsieur," continued his host, leading him up to another lady, middle-aged—"here is one of our best friends, though but newly settled near us,

who I doubt not will have the pleasure of conversing with you in your own tongue—Monsieur Ardon—Madame——"

Roderick was so amused by the transformation of his own name that he scarcely caught the lady's, but he was too shy still either to correct the one or inquire about the other.

"M. Reynier is very polite," said his neighbour, still speaking in French. "But he forgets that it is my daughter who knows English so well; her papa took the greatest pains to teach her. For me—I was always too busy, and too stupid. Besides," with a slight sigh, which directed Roderick's attention from the gentle face to the widow's mourning—though not exactly "weeds"—" my husband loved French

best. It was the language of his adopted country."

"He was not Swiss-born, then?" asked Roderick, sitting down by her. She was neither beautiful, nor even pretty, never could have been; but there was a great charm in her manner—a mixture of French grace and Swiss earnestness—which attracted him much.

"No, monsieur; he was English, or rather Scotch, naturalized here. My daughter!"—but no translation can express the tender intonation of that word *ma fille*—"will you come and tell this gentleman the name of the place—I cannot pronounce it—where your dear papa was born?"

Roderick's gaze followed madame's to a

tall slender girl, dressed, not like her mother in black, but in pure white; no floppy, flouncy muslin, but a thick soft woollen material, up to the throat and down to the wrists. She had a small, well-set, curly head—actual curls, like a child's—and turning quietly round, she met him with those calm blue eyes, the very same eyes which had filled with tears at the sunset beauty of the Jungfrau!

Once more the young man started, absolutely started. He seemed taken—nay, clutched, by the very hand of destiny itself. For on entering the room he had looked into every fresh face of these pleasant Swiss girls, vaguely hoping to find again those wonderful blue eyes. They faced him now in entire unconsciousness, and

with a direct child-like simplicity, corresponding with the childish curls.

"Mamma," she said, bowing to the stranger, a grave, dignified, self-possessed bow, more like that of a frank Englishwoman than these timid foreign maidens, "pardon. I am just going to sing with Sophie Reynier; but I will come back presently, as M. Reynier desired me, and speak English with this gentleman, if he wishes it."

He did not wish it at all; he would infinitely have preferred French. He thought that language, as she spoke it, in tones lower and softer than he had ever heard before, sounded like the tongue of the angels.

And when, in the duet, after Mademoi-

selle Reynier had sung a few bars, there broke in, like a lark in the dusk of the morning, a clear, fresh soprano, the very voice he had heard behind him in church, Roderick felt himself literally trembling. He was impressionable, it was true—almost as much so as a woman; there was a deal of the woman in him for all his manliness—rather, I should say, *with* all his manliness, since the best woman has always somewhat of a man's strength, the noblest man a woman's gentleness; but no impressionability could account for the delight—nay, the ecstasy, with which he listened to the song.

It was not much of a song—the girl's voice made it all; but when it ceased he awoke, as out of a dream, and looked round

as for something he had been in search of all his life long.

She came forward from among the group of girls—sweet, graceful girls they were, but none like her. She seemed distinct from any girl he had ever seen. The very style of her dress, so different from what he had left behind in Richerden drawing-rooms, caught his fancy. Instead of the fashionable eccentricities of dress which he hated so in his sisters, were these simple, girlish curls—natural curls—clustering tightly round her head; and these long, soft lines of drapery, like Flaxman's women. In truth, she might have stood just as she was for a Penelope, an Andromache.

"Mamma," she said, still in French, and

creeping, French-girl fashion, close to her mother's side, "I shall be very happy to speak English to monsieur, whom I think I have seen before—on the Terrasse at Berne to-day. It is he, mamma, who, as I told you, did us the honour to be so charmed with our beautiful mountains."

Then she, too, had observed him. But she had come home and told the incident at once to her mother. He, now, could not have told it to any mortal soul.

"It is mademoiselle who honours me by even a passing remembrance," answered Roderick, striving hard to infuse into his blunt speech—how rude and blunt it seemed!—even a tithe of her gracious courtesy. "May I claim you as a country-woman? Your father was English?"

"No, Scotch. There is a difference, is there not? though I fail to make mamma understand it. Papa was a Highlander."

She said this in English, speaking slowly, but with great purity and correctness, pronouncing all her "h's" and "th's."

"Mademoiselle has a perfect accent; she must, of course, have visited our country?" said Roderick, eagerly.

"No; I have never left my mountains. I am entirely Swiss; only papa used sometimes to talk to me of Scotland, and tell me I looked almost like a Scotch lassie. Do I?"

"Heaven forbid!" the renegade was near exclaiming, but contented himself by explaining, in a very eccentric and confused manner, that she had certainly

the fair hair and blue eyes of the North.

"So had papa; but he was little, and I am tall—very tall for a Swiss girl. That was why he thought I resembled the girls of his country, and especially a cousin he had whom he loved—liked—is not that the right English word?—very much. But here I am going on talking of ourselves and our affairs, which is very unpolite, you know. But we are always so glad to meet any English person, mamma and I. I must go and tell her—she will be so pleased that you think me a little—just a very little—like my papa's country-women."

He would have told her that the thing she was most like was an angel, but of course such a point-blank truth was quite

impossible, and, besides, she had already flown away on her invisible wings, and hid herself among the crowd of ordinary girls. There was nothing for him, poor man! but to go and make love, or rather politeness, to her mother, with all the skill and the best French of which he was capable.

"Mademoiselle has a most beautiful voice, and sings charmingly," said he at last.

"Ah! monsieur is too kind. But indeed it is true. And she does everything charmingly, if a mother may be pardoned for saying so. But she is the last of seven, and her father is dead. We are alone together, she and I." Then, suddenly changing into brightness, "Perhaps monsieur is one of a numerous family?"

"No, I have only three sisters, and my father, too, is dead—my dear father!"

"Ah!" with a quick intuition; and, after a glance at his face, a kindly hand was laid on the young man's arm. "But monsieur has his mother still living? and a happy woman in possessing him is Madame ——; pardon, but I did not catch the name."

"Jardine—Roderick Jardine."

The Swiss lady drew back with a surprise that he could not have failed to observe, had he not been wholly preoccupied in the difficult task of trying at once to be polite to her and to see and hear all that was passing at the far end of the room.

"Madame, I perceive your daughter is

going to sing again, and I am so fond of music. May I go and listen?"

He was off as if there were wires to his feet. Poor fellow! it was a very bad case, but not the first, nor probably the last, that has happened in this world.

However, he maintained his composure very creditably, talked courteously to all the Demoiselles Reynier at once, turned over their pages, examined their music, French, Italian, and German, and at last, lighting upon an English song, asked if any of them sang it.

The girls all shook their merry heads, pointing to the one whom he had not addressed, scarcely even glanced at, though he knew exactly how she looked, sitting there at the piano with her blue eyes cast

down, and a faint colour, like a China rose, on her soft cheek.

"*She* sings it; ask her."

"Will mademoiselle do me that honour?" said Roderick, quite humbly, feeling more timid than he had ever felt in his life.

"It is written for a tenor voice, monsieur. It is not a young lady's song."

"Yet I have often heard young ladies sing it, and very badly, too,"—remembering how he had hated it at Richerden dinner-parties.

"Perhaps, I also——" with an amused look, which he answered by another.

"No, no! Mademoiselle is too honest to finish her sentence. She knows she could not sing very badly."

"I will try my best."

It was a simple little song: most people have heard it "done to death" in many a drawing-room—"My Queen." This girl sang it in her pretty foreign English—not broken English, but, of course, with a slight accent, which rather increased the charm—sang it, not impetuously, but with a tender reserve, her China roses slowly growing into crimson ones as she did it, till at last she seemed to forget herself in the song—

"When and how shall I earliest meet her?
What are the words that she first will say?
By what name shall I learn to greet her?
I know not now: it will come some day.
With this selfsame sunlight shining upon her,
Shining down on her ringlets' sheen—
She is standing somewhere; she I will honour—
She that I wait for—my Queen, my Queen!

* * * * * * *

"I will not dream of her tall and stately:
She that I love may be airy and light.
I will not say she must speak sedately:
Whatever she does, it will sure be right.
She may be humble or proud, my lady,
Or that sweet calm which is just between;
But, whenever she comes, she will find me ready
To do her homage—my Queen, my Queen!

"But she must be courteous, she must be holy,
Pure, sweet, and tender, the girl I love.
Whether her birth be humble or lowly
I care no more than the angels above.
And I'll give my heart to my lady's keeping,
And ever her strength on my own shall lean;
And the stars shall fall and the saints be weeping,
Ere I cease to love her—my Queen, my Queen!"

"Thanks," said Roderick, in English.

It was a mere word, scarcely audible, the briefest and most common-place acknowledgment, yet it seemed to imply the gratitude, the benediction of a lifetime, given from the man to the woman whom he at once recognizes as *the* woman sent

by Heaven (if he has eyes to see, and strength to accept and hold her) to be to him his "help-meet," his joy, his crown, and his salvation.

The feeling was so sudden, so solemn, so overpowering, that he never attempted to fight against it. Without another word he withdrew from the group—from her even; indeed, it seemed easier to watch her from a distance than to speak to her—and waited till the mother and daughter should retire, when he was determined to find out from M. Reynier all about them. At this moment—it was almost ridiculous—he actually did not know their names!

Another half-hour — spent Roderick scarcely knew how, except that he was talking to half-a-dozen people, and watch-

ing one other person all the while—and he saw them retire; passing him with the usual distant bow. He had half extended his hand, English fashion, but happily drew it back in time.

"Au revoir, monsieur," responded the mother, with a courteous smile; but the daughter merely bent her head without a word.

"A charming pair," observed Madame Reynier, after they were gone. "My husband thought you would like to meet them. Mademoiselle speaks English so well."

"Perfectly."

"And yet she has never quitted Switzerland. Her father lived in the very heart of the Alps; a most learned and amiable

man, but eccentric—decidedly eccentric. He left them poor. She is obliged to teach—to give music lessons—this dear Mademoiselle Silence."

"What did you say? What is her name?" cried Roderick, feeling all the blood rushing to his heart—to his face.

"It is an English name. I will call my daughter to pronounce it English fashion." And, with an amazement that even amounted to awe, Roderick discovered that this girl—the first girl in all his life who had won from him a second thought—was his cousin; very distant, but still a cousin, and another Silence Jardine.

In his Quixotic search he had done nothing—had almost forgotten what he meant to do; yet here was all done for

him. With a feeling as of a man pursued by fate—blind, irresistible, and yet most blessed fate—he, without asking a single question more, got away as soon as he could. Once outside that friendly door, and away from everybody's sight, he rushed, almost staggering as he went, down to the waterside, and spent an hour there, walking wildly to and fro in the moonlight—the wonderful, sweet moonlight, bright as day—which poured itself in a silver glory over the smooth lake and the sleeping town.

CHAPTER V.

Liking—or Love?

"Who ever wooed
As in his boyish hope he would have done?"

AND what man ever found the woman among women, in whom he fondly sees "his bride to be, his ever new delight," exactly when and where he had expected to find her?

This girl, Silence Jardine—Roderick smiled over the Gallicised version of the old family name; and yet how pretty it sounded—that she was meant for him;

that she would one day be his wife, if by any human power, or patience, such a joy were possible, he never once doubted. All his life he had been accustomed to get every good thing he wanted. Why not this?

Besides, he felt so strong; so capable of winning anything, everything. That one hour of passionate pacing up and down under the stars seemed to have made a man of him; like the solitary vigil which the young esquires of old were left to spend, previous to being dubbed knights. When he awoke, quite early, long before daybreak, he was no longer a dreamy boy, but a belted knight ready to go out and fight, with his lady's token on his helm and his lady's love in his heart. And yet,

only twenty hours ago, his life had been so aimless that at breakfast he had actually tossed up a half-penny to decide whether or not he should go direct home to Richerden!

Now what was to be done?

Not, certainly, what impulse prompted, to find out Madame Jardine's address (would that he had known it last night, and could have watched, Romeo-like, under the window of his sweet, unconscious Juliet!), and, entering the house like a whirlwind, fling himself at the dear lady's feet, proclaiming himself her unknown cousin, imploring her to take all Miss Jardine's money—and his too—if only she would give him her priceless treasure, her daughter Silence!

That she was a priceless treasure, this gentle Swiss girl, he never doubted, though it was only twenty-four hours—no, less, sixteen—since he had first seen her face. But the Reyniers loved her; and the Reyniers were most estimable people, and must know. In fact, having already made up his mind, it was easy to argue from foregone conclusions. And besides, the whole affair looked so like fatality—the fatality which secretly follows us all our lives, only some of us see it, and some do not.

When the lazy sun began to rise, and show his glorious face over the peaks of the Jungfrau, precisely as yesterday—ah, what strange things had happened since yesterday! so that in his life it was no

longer dawn, but full day—Roderick felt as if he had come hither, not of his own will, but under the guidance of dear dead hands, his father's and another's; helpless once, but so strong and helpful now. Knowing what he did know, and guessing what never could be known in this world, he yet felt sure that, if there was one person more than another whom his father would have preferred him to marry, it would be a Silence Jardine.

But he must be very cautious. That they were poor, the Reyniers had told him, though the fact had scarcely entered his mind—he knew so little about poverty, and cared so little about riches. They might be proud; if so, perhaps it would be as well not to let them know he was

wealthy. Some vague idea struck him of acting the Lord of Burleigh over again; but Silence had no need to grow "a noble lady,"—she was that already. Not a girl in Richerden was fit to tie her shoes. Even his mother and sisters——

But there was a certain loyalty in the young man, which made him revolt from judging these as he judged other Richerden folk. They were his own—he loved them.

She, the new-found, all-perfect, "inexpressive she!"

"The stars shall fall and the saints be weeping
Ere I cease to love her, my queen—my queen!"

He kept humming the song to himself in a passionate undertone all the way to M. Reynier's, whither he had determined to

go and explain what Mr. Black, in the feeble French of his letter of introduction, had left wholly unexplained, the why and wherefore of young Mr. Jardine's visit to Switzerland.

How he got through that explanation, as he sat face to face with the kind old professor, in dressing-gown and slippers, Roderick never could tell. Nor what M. Reynier thought of it, though he veiled his opinion in most sympathetic politeness, and gave at once the address which the young man asked, or believed he had asked, in the most business-like and indifferent manner possible.

"Certainly, certainly, yes; and my wife and daughters shall call at once to congratulate the dear ladies on their good

fortune in being discovered by so excellent a relative. Stay, perhaps monsieur would like Madame Reynier to go in advance and break to them the good tidings? It might startle them, and Madame Jardine is in very delicate health, and they are very poor, monsieur knows?"

Yes, he knew it; but he did not take it in—no more than the young queen who, hearing her subjects lacked bread, suggested their eating cake.

"I think, Monsieur Reynier," he said, with modest hesitation, "I should like to tell them myself. It is a family matter, and they would not feel my visit a liberty. They are my cousins, you see. If"—with a sudden idea that almost made him smile—"if you would kindly vouch for me

that I am—well, respectable, in short."

"Even if monsieur did not carry his letter of recommendation in his face, Mr. Black's guarantee would have been quite sufficient," answered the professor, with grave politeness.

Another time, Roderick would have laughed to think what his mother would have thought of her son's owing his sole credentials of character to Mr. Black the factor! but now he was in too great haste to linger an instant more than courtesy demanded; and it seemed hours, rather than minutes, before, armed with M. Reynier's *petit billet*, he found himself mounting the long stair (so like a Scotch one, only clean, scrupulously clean), *étage* after *étage*. Madame Jardine lived *au*

quatrième, almost up to the roof of the tall house.

"Are they so very poor?" he thought, with a sharp pang, followed by a wild delight. To come as the *Deus ex machinâ*—the good genius—the protecting angel—how delicious! Ay, even though it were actual want he was about to find.

But no such discovery presented itself to the eyes of the young man, delicate in his tastes, quick, morbidly quick, to detect and revolt from anything coarse or squalid. A little Swiss damsel, in *sabots*, opened the door of the *appartement* and showed him into a salon—very foreign certainly; his mother would have been shocked at the almost carpetless floor and curtainless windows; but exquisitely neat,

harmonious in colour, refined in arrangement. The glaring grandeur, the heavy splendour, of those familiar Richerden drawing-rooms, were altogether absent; but there was a soft subdued light, a faint odour of flowers, some aromatic late autumn flowers, which lapped his senses in a strange bewildering pleasure. He sat down, wondering if he were dreaming, and whether he should not shortly wake and find himself back in Richerden, looking out into the muggy streets, the dreary park, glad to escape from himself, and from that luxurious habitation which was called "home."

And when she entered—not madame, but mademoiselle—he felt more than ever as if the whole thing were a vision of the

night. She entered with a soft, silent grace, which made her Puritanic name seem the most appropriate possible, and, standing still in the door-way, bowed to him in the distant foreign way. But she spoke in English—her sweet, slow, precise English, very correct in accent, though the sentences were sometimes arranged French fashion, and the "monsieur," translated into "sir," frequently appeared therein, in a funny un-English way.

"Mamma has sent me, sir, to present her regrets that she cannot see you." (He had announced himself merely as a friend of M. Reynier's.) "But she is a little more suffering than usual to-day, and she has not risen. Will you say to me that which you desired to say to her?"

"I know—I feel—it is I who ought to apologize," stammered Roderick, feeling it absolutely impossible to face those great, blue, innocent, ignorant eyes. "But I came on business—business which could not be delayed."

The young girl visibly shrank. "Oh, I hope—I hope it is no more sorrow; mamma has suffered so much."

"Indeed, no; quite the contrary, I trust. May I be permitted to explain?"

But he could not explain. His tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth. All his self-possession, his good common-sense, even his good manners, seemed to have fled from him. He felt like a boor, an actual boor, in the presence of this young creature, whom he had so suddenly

elected, or believed Fate had elected for him, as the angel of his life, the mistress of his heart, the queen and ruler of his destiny. So foolish, so romantic are some men, even in this matter-of-fact nineteenth century! O women—queens that might be—think, are you all found worthy to wear your crown?

"I am afraïd—I—— Pardon, but if mademoiselle would condescend to take these to madame her mother," said he, hurriedly, falling back into French, as if its formal phrases of politeness made a barrier against himself and his irrepressible agitation.

She received the letter and card without looking at him or at them; he felt a slight pang in noticing that, though evidently

recognizing him, she showed not the slightest curiosity even to learn his name —and vanished from the salon.

"Vanished" was the most appropriate word for her. Some women—Roderick had known several at home—enter a room with a bounce and quit it with a bang; this girl stole into it like sunshine or any other blessed, silent thing, and departing, left darkness behind her. Or so the young man thought, the hapless or happy fellow to whom had come the first sunburst of that mysterious instinct called Love.

An instinct which, though not excluding reason, sometimes transcends it in a very remarkable way. For, had you asked, he could hardly have told you why this face

had so charmed him. Now that he saw it in full daylight, he recognized that it was not really beautiful: in truth, he had often seen much handsomer women. Nay, by the odd contrast which Nature often amuses herself with, had he looked into the mirror opposite he would have seen features far more artistically "correct;" a finer figure and altogether a much more *distingué* specimen of humanity. But he did not look: he never thought about himself at all, only of her. He felt as if he never should think, except of her, to the end of his days.

Could his mother, who believed no woman alive too good for her boy—perhaps not good enough—could Mrs. Jardine have seen him sitting humbly there in a paltry

Swiss parlour, all the contents of which might be valued at a few pounds, watching, counting each minute till the door should open to admit—what? a poor little Swiss girl, a mere music-teacher, neither grand nor stylish, whose dress—nay, whose whole wardrobe—could scarcely have cost the sum that the Richerden damsels were in the habit of paying for a pocket-handkerchief or a muff! Nay, who was not even a pretty girl, except for her eyes; since the wonderful expression which spiritualized her whole face into beauty, and which in the most perfect degree had been caught by Roderick when he first saw her gazing at the Jungfrau, was not likely to be detected by the lady, who might one day be—oh, startling thought,

had either known it!—her mother-in-law.

The link between them, the young man who already contemplated welding together such a union of opposites, sat for fully half an hour, forlorn as a sparrow on a house-top, and very near the house-top too, before any sign reached him that *his* possible mother-in-law—the sweet Swiss lady whom he felt he loved already, she was so like her daughter in some things—had recognized his existence or his eagerly claimed cousinship. At last the door opened.

Roderick sprang forward, then drew back painfully embarrassed. But Silence advanced with that gentle composure which nothing ever seemed to disturb, and with only the faintest added colour in her

cheek, as, English fashion, she extended her little, soft, thoroughly English-looking hand.

"Monsieur my cousin, mamma bids me welcome you to our country, and to say that she will receive you at six this evening, if you will do her the honour to come."

"Mademoiselle ma cousine, the honour is entirely on my side. I shall be only too delighted."

And then he paused, half expecting she would say something more, or at least ask him to be seated; but she did not. Evidently it was not the custom of Swiss young ladies to hold morning interviews with young gentlemen in the absence of their mothers.

He, accustomed to have young ladies more than civil to him, absolutely "running after" him, so far as he would let them do it; lively young ladies who danced and joked, flirted, and talked slang, meaning no harm certainly, but persisting in making themselves "jolly companions every one" to the opposite sex, he was struck into more than admiration, reverence, for this gentle, reticent, womanly woman, who held herself aloof from all men, except in mere courtesy, until there should come the man to whom she could unlock her inmost soul. He fancied her sailing along, moon-like, in her calm, blue sky of maidenly life till—till she reached Latmos. And then, oh! the dream of the stretched-out longing arms, of the passion

of meeting hearts, each as pure as the other, in a love old as the heavens and young as the ever-renewed earth.

He started—and truly he had need to start, this self-made Endymion, this very foolish shepherd—and remembered that he was a modern English gentleman paying a morning call, and that he must immediately take up his hat and go.

The more so as in spite of herself his young "cousin"—how he clung to the word and the tie—was, he could perceive, a good deal agitated. Her colour changed, her little fingers fluttered over her dress; yes, it was a grey dress, of the sort called Carmelite, for he recollected once admiring the same on some lady visitor, and his sister Bella had laughed at him, saying it

only cost a shilling a yard, and was just "fit for table-maids." But upon *her*, with its soft folds and tender, dove-like tint, he could have knelt down and kissed its very hem!

"Mademoiselle—Miss Jardine."

She lifted up her eyes, smiling. "Yes, I am that by right, and I like to be called so. 'Miss' reminds me that I belong a little to my father's country."

"Then you are satisfied—your mother too is quite satisfied, that I am really your cousin?" cried Roderick, eagerly.

"Not my cousin-german of course," she answered, again drawing back a little, "but my cousin much removed—how do you say it in English?—*très-éloigné*. That is, they had the same great-grand-parents

—these three who were educated together, Mr. Henry Jardine, who was the father of monsieur, my own father, and the lady I was named after, Cousin Silence."

"Then you too have heard of Cousin Silence?" cried Roderick, feeling every minute the mysterious chains more tightly drawn round him.

"Certainly; my father loved her very much once—always, I think—though it was years since he had written to her. Did you know her? Is she living yet?"

M. Reynier's note, evidently, then, had explained nothing of the money affairs. Roderick felt glad. His welcome here was simply as "Monsieur mon cousin," nothing more.

"Cousin Silence is not living, but it is scarcely two months since she died."

"Ah, then I shall never see her, and I should have liked it so! Sometimes papa promised when I was older to take me to see his land, and Blackhall, and Miss Silence Jardine. Did you ever see her, sir?"

"Once—only once; the day my father died. A sad story. I will tell you about it another time."

By a sudden instinct she seemed to catch his change of look, of tone. "Monsieur is very good," she said, gently, and questioned no more.

There was indeed no more to say, no possible excuse for him to remain; yet he lingered. Shy as a school-boy, he

felt as if he could not get out of the room.

"This evening at six, then," said Mademoiselle Jardine, with gentle dismissal, not again offering her hand, but merely bowing, as Roderick walked—he felt very much as if he were crawling—out of the salon.

And yet it was a glorious humility, a noble shame, a sensation more delicious than anything he had believed the world could offer. The world, so empty to him of sympathy, of love, that is, the up-looking love, since his dear father died. He almost felt as if his father knew it all; the reflex of what perhaps he too had known in his youth, the "love's young dream," which never comes twice. Happy those to

whom it comes truly as love, and neither as passion nor as folly; who can say to themselves, as Roderick did during the weary hours between twelve and six, "Now what shall I do for *her?* What would she like me to do? Something, I am sure, that would be good and right."

And with this purpose, and perhaps another behind it, he sat down and did, what he had forgotten to do, day after day, ever since he reached Neuchâtel,—he wrote a long letter home to his mother. A very affectionate, amusing, clever letter, just what he knew would please her, and which, as he also knew, she would show to every near and dear friend she had. Consequently, it was not exactly confi-

dential; indeed, Roderick was not in the habit of writing confidential letters to anybody; but it was quite honest so far as it went; gave a glowing description of the Alps at Berne, and an amusing one of the soirée at Professor Reynier's; painted graphically the quaint little town of Neuchâtel, where he said he intended to stay a few days longer, and ended by stating briefly how he had found, among M. Reynier's guests, the object of his search; at least, all that were left to find, Archibald Jardine's widow and only surviving child. Whether the "child" was old or young, boy or girl, he omitted to particularize—a degree of reserve which surpassed even the ordinary reticence of Mr. Roderick Jardine.

Poor mother! she was rather to be pitied, if she had known all. And yet, seeing it is from the first the parents who make the children, and not the children the parents, perhaps mothers who need pity for not receiving the full confidence of their sons, have in some way or other earned what they get. Alas! it is both a sad and awe-striking thought that many a poor "black sheep" may have been dyed that ominous colour by the authors of his being, both after his birth and before it.

Poor dear woman!—paying sedulously her vapid, useless morning calls, doing her endless shopping, dining out, or arranging dinner-parties at home, occupations which filled up the sum total of Mrs. Jardine's existence, and which she expect-

ed her family to conform to, as the old generation so constantly expects the new to grow up exactly after its own pattern —little she guessed that this untoward new generation had already taken its lot into its own hands. Little she knew, on receiving her welcome letter, that the instant her son finished it, he plunged into a world of dreamy delight, in which she had no part, wherein almost her existence was temporarily forgotten. Yet so it was; so it must inevitably be. Happy those parents who are wise enough to accept the inevitable—accept and forgive. Happier still those who are able even to sympathize: "I also have been in Arcadia."

How far the muggy atmosphere and swimming streets of Neuchâtel now re-

sembled Arcadia, is doubtful; yet, when Roderick went out to post his letter, he seemed to walk on air. Every corner of the quaint old town looked picturesque; every passer-by interesting. For he had a vague hope—half fear too—that under some umbrella he might find the grey gown, black felt hat, and blue eyes.

Just on the faintest chance of this, he went round by the shore of the lake, where a sudden wild wind had caused the waves to rise and roll in, almost like a sea tide, greatly to the distress of the poor Neuchâtellerois. Various movables had been carried away, and a large market barrow was now tossing up and down upon actual breakers—while its luckless owner stood wringing her hands, and two

or three men were wading in, vainly trying to catch it with ropes.

Roderick went to help them; he never could forbear rushing to the rescue, in any case where his youthful strength was available. Presently he succeeded in saving the cart, and in wetting himself to the skin; which he hardly felt, for, in wading ashore, the first sight he saw, fixed upon him, was those two earnest blue eyes!

She stood among the little crowd, her umbrella in one hand, a roll of music in the other; behind her the little white-capped *bonne* stood full of sympathy—as indeed everybody was—first, with the owner of the cart, and then with its salvors. She recognized him at once.

"Oh, how good is monsieur!" she exclaimed warmly in French. "See, madame," turning to the poor market-woman—"your cart is safe, absolutely uninjured. How kind, how brave it was of these men, and of this English monsieur!"

And then monsieur, half deafened by the storm of thanks and applause from these warm Swiss hearts, was glad to beat a retreat, and find himself, he knew not how, walking along by the side of Mademoiselle Jardine, and talking, still in French, about how it all happened.

"I have never seen the lake rise so," she said. "All the town has been down here, watching the waves, which are higher, they say, than they have been seen

for twenty years—ever since the year I was born."

She was twenty then; he had thought her younger.

"Mamma happened to be at Neuchâtel, and remembers it well—that day—she had me in her arms, a little baby, and, if papa had not held her fast, the waves and the wind would have swept us away, both of us. How strange it seems!"

"Very strange; but life is very strange!" said the young man, as he drank in, full of dreamy delight, the soft tones, the sudden sweet up-lifting of those lovely eyes. They rested on his soaked clothes.

"Monsieur ought to go at once to his hotel!" she said, with a pretty decision.

"Pardon; but I am so accustomed to look after people—to take care of them. I always have to take care of mamma, you know. She has been an invalid so long, with her chest. I think it is that which has given me a morbid terror of damp and wet."

"Yet you are out in all this rain, *ma cousine?*" intentionally changing the word from "mademoiselle," and seeing with delight that, though she took no notice, she half smiled, as if not displeased.

"Oh, I? That is quite a different thing. I am strong; nothing ever harms me. Besides, it is unavoidable. I give lessons; I must go out, you know."

That gentle, firm "il faut," to one who had never known an unpleasant "must"

in his life—how it went to the young man's heart!

"Is it very hard work, this teaching?" said he, trying to hide the inexpressible tenderness that was already trembling in his voice.

"Oh no, not at all hard; quite pleasant, sometimes!" she replied, cheerfully. "But monsieur must really go to his hotel at once. *Au revoir*, till six!"

And with a brief, sweet remorselessness, she bowed and passed on, picking her way through the water-channels and the mud, and never once looking behind. If she had!

But no. Roderick felt certain she had no more idea of what he was feeling than the moon has of those who stand and gaze

at her, so entirely serene and composed was her bearing, so free from the slightest self-consciousness, or consciousness of him either, such as he had seen in some girls, who changed their manner on the instant any man addressed them. Now this young Swiss girl seemed sufficient to herself, and independent of every man alive.

It was not flattering exactly, in the mean way by which some young men like to be flattered; yet, as Roderick turned into his hotel, mechanically obeying her, and taking pleasure in doing so, he felt more and more that she was the one woman in the world whom he could love—nay, worship—whether she ever thought of him or not; and owning this he sighed.

Already he had ceased to be satisfied with the "moon-struck madness" of abstract admiration, already had come the desire of possession, of having the beloved treasure all to himself, of hiding it close in his bosom, "lest his jewel he should tine." Fast as his love had grown, like Jack's bean-stalk, all in a night, it had already reached this height.

Another point it had reached also. To think of her—her whom he would have shielded from every harsh blast, and made life to her an actual bed of roses—walking through the soaking streets, giving horrible music-lessons! It was to him positive agony. Was she so poor? And he, laden with that heap of useless riches!

This evening, with an involuntary and quite inexplicable feeling, he did not seek for his diamond studs or any other resplendency of his always careful toilette, but dressed himself as simply as possible. He felt as if he could have gone in sackcloth and ashes, if by any means it could have advantaged her.

Again he climbed, but impetuously, joyously, as if it were the high-road to heaven, the long stair which led to Madame Jardine's door, and found that what he had hoped would be a party *à trois* was added to by the pleasant faces of M. Reynier and his daughters, and one or two other guests—not pleasant, however, to his eyes at all. Nevertheless, he made the best of it. Most young men would

have delightedly acted *cavalier seul* to such a charming cluster of girls; but Roderick would a thousand times rather have sat beside this one girl and watched her pour out the tea and distribute the various condiments which seemed to compose this innocent evening meal, after the custom of the Neuchâtel folk.

How charming it was, and how charming they were! Had he had his full perceptions in use, and even with the proportion he had available, allowing for the unfortunate peculiarity of having always to listen for what *she* was saying, and watch what *she* was doing, the young man could not have failed to discover the extreme intelligence, mingled with extreme simplicity, of this little society, where all were

poor (or what his mother would have thought, poor), but all refined and cultivated. Never, even in his Cambridge life, had he heard better "conversation" (that rare, delightful art or science—which is it?—which only well-bred and well-educated people can attain to) than he now heard round this simple board, in a far-away Swiss town, and in a widow's household too, where, so far as he could see, there was not a trace of wealth or luxury.

All the talk was in French, of course, but now and then "Miss" Jardine addressed him in English, to which he eagerly responded, as to a sweet secret felicity in which the rest did not share. And how he thanked the benign fate which dragged

away the masculine element in the party to some lecture—half Neuchâtel seemed composed of *professeurs* or *écoliers*—and compelled an early breaking-up.

"But Monsieur Jardine, who is not at college, need not depart," said madame, courteously. "Will he not stay and tell us a little of his beautiful Scotland, which my husband loved so, and sometimes thought to see once more, but he died without seeing it? Come and sit by me, *chérie*, and listen. She loves her father's land almost as if she had seen it, does my daughter Silence."

Afterwards, how like a dream seemed that first evening, that first talk, almost a family talk, in the dim light of the shaded lamp, with the wind howling outside

round the roof of the lofty house, and inside peace, all peace. What a picture it made! the invalid mother half sitting, half lying on her sofa, and her daughter on a stool at her feet, Desdemona-like, listening, all eyes and ears, as this new Othello told them, not of his wars, labours, and sufferings, for he had none to tell, but of Scotland and of Blackhall, the little that he knew—how he wished it had been more! Lastly, of the only time he had seen Cousin Silence, when she came to his father's death-bed; and of that beloved father, whom he scarcely ever mentioned to strangers. But with these it was a feeling altogether different.

Mother and daughter, so sweet, so united, so simple, so good. "How I

wish," he exclaimed once, "that my father had known you, or that you had known my father!"

And then Madame Jardine questioned him rather closely about himself and his college life, watching him with great intentness, and with a gentle shrewdness which showed that amidst all her simplicity she was a far-seeing woman, not altogether ignorant of the world and its ways. Finally she drew from him the story of his journey hither and its object.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment of both mother and daughter when they learned that they had "inherited"—Roderick carefully put it in that light, trusting to his good luck to be able to explain it away afterwards—inherited a

sum of money from Miss Silence Jardine.

"How good of her! how generous!" cried Madame Jardine, clasping her hands with one of those impulsive gestures which we English think so strange, but which in her seemed perfectly natural. But they had not descended to her daughter, who, in mien and manner, was not at all what we term "foreign," but as quiet as any English girl. "I should explain to you, monsieur," continued Madame Jardine, "that in his youth my husband did his cousin a great unkindness—nay, a wrong. He could not help it; she made him so unhappy. But all that is past now, and I —I made him happy. And she has made us rich—this good Cousin Silence."

"Not rich exactly," Roderick confusedly

explained. "It is only an old house, with perhaps two or three hundred a year."

"Two or three hundred a year! Why, that is a fortune, an absolute fortune! Let us bless the good God for it! Silence, my child, I shall not leave you in poverty."

She burst into tears, and then, wholly oblivious of the stranger's presence, mother and daughter fell into one another's arms and sobbed together.

Roderick knew not what to do. The sight of joy, as of sorrow, in any earnest, simple, passionate form, was to him almost unknown. He had never witnessed, even in womankind, anything beyond respectable grief and decorous pleasure. He remembered how, in her inmost

pangs of widowhood, his mother had counted, with evident satisfaction, the ninety-seven letters of condolence which she had received; and he doubted if any family event, even a daughter's marriage, would have produced in her such a gush of emotion as he now witnessed in these poor Swiss ladies. What straits they must have gone through; how terrible must have been their fear of poverty, when a few paltry hundreds could so brighten the future as thus to affect them both.

Roderick could not understand it at all; but he—could it be said he enjoyed it? Anyhow, he stood gazing at them in a passion of silent sympathy; until, afraid if he stayed longer he should commit himself

in some frantic way that would make these gentle ladies consider him as a dangerous lunatic, and cut his acquaintance for evermore, he stole quietly out of the room and house, leaving a message that he would do himself the honour to call the next day and explain his sudden departure.

Then he ran down the steep staircase, nor paused once to think till he found himself in the safe, calm moonlight by the lake shore.

CHAPTER VI.

Heaven upon Earth.

"MARRY in haste and repent at leisure," was a saying Roderick had often quoted to his mother, when she urged him to that rash proceeding; and had instanced sagely the extreme imprudence of certain young fellows of his acquaintance, who, seeing a pretty face in a ball-room, had run after it, hunted it down —only too easily! caught it, married it— and woke up to find it a mere pretty face —no more.

"An Elle-maid, mother," he had said, laughing, one day. "I don't want to marry an Elle-maid."

"What's that?"

"A young lady something like a tin jelly-mould, only to be viewed on the outside. Now I would like a whole woman for my wife, including brains and a heart; and if I could get her, I would serve for her, like Jacob, for even seven years."

"Seven years? Nonsense! It was only seven weeks from the day I first met your dear father till the day he married me."

"Was it, mother?" Roderick had answered briefly, and dropped the conversation.

"Festina lente" is a most true aphor-

ism; and yet, like most aphorisms, it has its reverse side. Fate now and then throws into a few days—a few hours—the history and experience of years.

From that auspicious morning when he had discovered himself to his Swiss "cousins," as he persisted in calling them, there was scarcely a day in which Roderick did not see them—at their own home or elsewhere. For the dear little town opened its arms at once to the handsome and courteous young Englishman, the friend of M. Reynier, the new-found kinsman of Madame Jardine.

He was invited everywhere—to pleasant family dinners, homely as elegant, and never later than one o'clock; to social evenings, beginning at six and ending at

half-past nine, after which—O felicity!—he often used the right of cousinship to walk with Madame Jardine and her daughter through the silent streets and by the placid lake-side, home.

It was a kind of society the very opposite pole of that at Richerden. Nobody was rich, and almost everybody was more or less well-educated. Consequently refinement and cultivation were everything—wealth was nothing. Roderick sometimes thought, with no small amusement, how ignorant everybody was of his own "well-off" condition, and how little it would have advantaged him here, at least with the families he liked best, such as M. Reynier's, who had been "savants" for generations, and Madame Jardine's, who said calmly,

"We are poor, we have always been poor; but we do not mind it. Our poverty has never lost us one real friend, nor made us a single enemy worth fearing."

She often said things of this sort, simple and wise, to the young man, in the many hours he spent beside her sofa, devoting himself to her in her patient invalidism, in a way that his own mother and sisters would have thought impossible. Chiefly to her, for he soon recognized and accepted the exceedingly distant terms upon which young ladies and young gentlemen always meet in foreign society, even such a simple society as this. He scarcely disliked it, for if it was a barrier between himself and his love—it effectually kept

off all other lovers. Not one of the various young men of Neuchâtel was, he soon saw, more than the merest acquaintance of Mademoiselle Jardine.

He too, at a month's end, had never once been alone for five minutes with his Cousin Silence, had scarcely ever touched her hand—that dear, lovely hand, on which he sometimes saw in fancy the plain gold ring which he, and he alone, was to put upon it, when he asked that it might lead and guide him through life. It could, he was sure. Little as he had talked with her, he had watched her very closely, and seen in her, by a thousand small indications of character—

> "The reason firm; the temperate will,
> Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;

A perfect woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort, and command."

Ay, gentle as she was, he had already found out, by the flash of her blue eye when encountering anything mean or base, that she was able both to "warn" and to "command." But he was too strong himself to be afraid of a woman's strength; and, oh! when he looked into those pure eyes, seeing not only them, but heaven beyond them—how he prayed that they might guide him through this world, and meet him safely on the eternal shore!

For now all the things which his father had sometimes said—only half understood then—came back upon him, and that passionate craving for perfect union here and hereafter, which constitutes the only per-

fect love, seized upon every fibre of his being. They were both so young—so very young!—and yet he already dared to look to the time when they should be old, when all the delights of youth should have faded away. But he would love her still, and want her still. He could imagine no condition of being when he did not want her, when he ceased to feel that earth—nay, heaven itself—would be empty without her. But all this while he had not spoken a word.

And she?

Close as their companionship had become, it was still an absolutely mute companionship. She went on her way, as calm and moonlike as ever, doing her daily duties, which seemed endless, with-

out reference to him at all. With her teaching, her housekeeping, her ceaseless charge of her mother, she was always active, always busy, in a way that, to Roderick, accustomed to live among women who wasted half their day in weary, luxurious idleness, appeared something marvellous.

"How is it that mademoiselle finds time to do so much?" he said once to the mother, who lay watching her child—not the only watcher on that and many another day.

"She does not find time, monsieur, she makes it. We poor people are obliged to learn this; and I hope she will not unlearn it, even when she is a rich woman."

Roderick smiled, and said no more. He

had not explained very much of business affairs, being, indeed, waiting anxiously till he could get an answer from his lawyer as to the possibility of transferring Miss Jardine's property to her Swiss relations, without the latter's suspecting that they had not inherited it direct. Until then, he persuaded himself, and wrote to persuade his mother, though in the wariest and briefest terms, that it was his "duty" to remain at Neuchâtel.

He likewise argued that it was far too late in the year for travelling or sight-seeing, and it was only when Mademoiselle Jardine one day represented to him, with a spice of humour, real Scotch humour, which sometimes flashed out in her, how ignominious it would be to go back home

without ever having seen Mont Blanc, that he planned a day at Lausanne—a whole day—if his kind cousin would accompany him and take care of him.

"And I will take care of madame your mother," he said, tenderly. "She shall travel with every possible luxury that she will let me provide. Indeed," he added, smiling, "I assure you I can afford it. I am, at least, as rich as—as mademoiselle ma cousine will be presently, if she chooses to take possession of Blackhall."

So it was arranged for the first fine day, which turned out to be one of those heavenly days which come even in November—transmuting the whole world into a beauty sweeter even than that of summer. As they sat in the railway car-

riage, they three alone together (Roderick had provided for that and every other possible luxury and comfort with a carefulness deliciously sweet and new), he and the mother talked together, and Silence looked out of the window, absorbed in the delight of her rare holiday. It was not a very pretty country, the level region, half pasture, half vineyards, round the head of the lake, but she watched it with eyes which seemed to enjoy everything so intensely that she never noticed the eyes of the two who were watching her.

Suddenly these met—the mother's and the lover's. Roderick started and blushed painfully.

"I am glad it is such a fine day," said he, hurriedly. "We might not have had

another, and, as soon as my sister's marriage day is fixed, I shall have to think of returning home."

Madame Jardine regarded him with sudden sharp inquiry.

"Home? Yes, certainly; yes, monsieur ought to be going home. He will probably not revisit Switzerland for some time?"

All the blood left the young man's face; he could keep up the sham of conversation no longer.

"Do you wish me not to return, madame? Do you dislike me? Does *she* dislike me?"

The words were said in the lowest whisper, and the hand he laid on Madame Jardine's trembled violently, till it was

conscious of a feeble pressure, while a faint smile brightened the kind, worn face.

"Madame," he said, still in a whisper, "if I am alive I will return, and speedily. You must surely have understood that by this time."

She looked him full in the eyes—an eager, questioning, almost pathetic look.

"Yes; you are good and true—I feel sure of it. I am satisfied."

This was all, for immediately afterwards Silence turned round, making some innocent, unconscious remark about their journey. But fixed in Roderick's mind, with a thankfulness that afterwards became almost awe, were those few words—what he had said to the mother, and what the mother had answered.

She scarcely spoke another word, being tired, and owning it, which was rare; for she was the most patient and uncomplaining of invalids. She left the other two to talk together. And so Silence, forced out of her shyness, if indeed it were shyness, and not a reticent maidenly repose, began to unfold, leaf by leaf, like a rose in sunshine. To Roderick, dreaming so long of the ideal womanhood which was to complete his manhood, and make that perfect oneness of married union which all hope for and so few find, it was truly like walking in a garden of roses.

"I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse." The sister of his soul, as well as the spouse of his heart—there is a deep meaning in those words. He could

believe it all when he looked into those dear eyes.

There are many so-called loves quite simple and comprehensible; passions, selfish and sensuous; fancies, roused often by vanity; rational, systematic, deliberate affections; but when the real love happens —the one great love which nothing ever alters, and which death alone destroys (no, not death even, God grant!)—it is always a mystery from beginning to end. Even they who feel it cannot understand it. There it is, rooted in the very core of them—life's supremest delight or sharpest agony. No effort can conquer it, no argument reason it down. Reciprocal or not, happy or not, it is there—a part of their being. Why it came, or what it is

—this passionate necessity of one for another, only one other, none else—as deep in its way as the necessity of the human heart for God; whether it was meant for this life only, and whether, missing this life, it will find its satisfaction in the life to come, as many poor souls have died joyfully believing—who can tell?

Roderick could not. He only knew he was happy—perfectly and contentedly happy—that the mere sense of her sitting beside him, the mere sound of her voice in his ear, filled him with entire, satisfied rest, even as he believed he should feel (and with a strange jump his fancy even then took in the pathetically foolish thought) thirty or forty years hence, when he was old and grey-headed, and her sweet

girlish face was as faded as her mother's; yet he would be himself and she herself—everything in the world that to him was lovely, precious, and dear.

Poor, young things! happy in a bliss still tremulous and serene, like the dawn before daylight, and which perhaps might only come again in the twilight before the dark. Any older person would have regarded them with a tenderness almost akin to tears.

"Is it Lausanne already?" said Silence, and then blushed, a vivid scarlet blush, the first Roderick had ever seen on her calm, colourless face. It made him start—nay, even tremble, as a young king might on suddenly hearing at the door the feet of the messengers who bring him a

longed-for crown, which, when it comes, he is almost afraid to wear.

But it was Lausanne railway station—he must rouse himself. The dream-world was come to an end; the practical world began.

An hour afterwards he had safely located his charges at the house of a friend of Madame Jardine's, where she was thankful to rest, had shared the hospitable meal, and was lingering uneasily about, shy and strange, when some one remarked that the English monsieur ought certainly to climb La Signale, and see what all travellers know is one of the finest views in Switzerland. But there was no one to show him the way, except two little boys, sons of the house, and Silence.

A sudden impulse, as of a man who is determined to have his way, conquered Roderick's diffidence.

"Madame, will you trust her with me? It is not Swiss fashion, I know, but in England I should be thought good knight enough to deserve the charge of any fair damsel, if she would so far condescend. Mademoiselle ma cousine?"

Silence looked up, looked down, and smiled. The mother cast a penetrating glance at the two, so innocently happy in one another's company.

"The good God makes it, not I," muttered she to herself. "My daughter, you, Adolphe, and Henri will show the view to our dear English cousin. He will acknowledge there is scarcely

a more beautiful sight to be seen in this world."

He did acknowledge it, when, having climbed the steep hill alone—for Silence mounted merrily with a big school-boy at either hand—he saw the whole lake from Geneva to Montreux, with its girdle of mountains, from Mont Blanc to the Bernese Alps, spread before him like a picture, as still and as clear.

All stood and gazed, till, the boys slipping away to some frolic or other, the little group was reduced to two. Neither spoke for ever so long—merely stood together. He could barely see her profile; she was as absorbed as she had been that day at Berne. If she felt she was not alone, felt who was beside her,

at any rate she did not show it. There was no restlessness, no wish to attract notice. Nothing but supreme content was in the sweet, firm mouth and earnest, out-looking eyes. If she were capable of love, it was a love so self-controlled, so entirely free alike from the delirium and the selfishness of passion, that the man who won it might well esteem himself as happy as the mythical Endymion, or Acis, or Numa Pompilius—Roderick thought of them all. Every man's first love is, or ought to be, a sort of goddess, something half divine; but it seemed to him he could better understand heaven when he looked into this girl's eyes—as he did at last.

Then she spoke.

"Is this as beautiful as you expected, mon cousin?"

"Yes; almost as beautiful as that view from Berne. Do you remember it—the day I first saw you? which seems years ago."

She bent her head in acquiescence, but said nothing. For him, he could not speak; a great awe was over him, even amidst the rapturous delight.

"Look," she said at last, pointing westward.

Suddenly, through the grey, cloudy sky, the sun broke out, poured down a torrent of light, like a cataract of molten gold, into the lake, then spanned it with a bridge of rays from shore to shore.

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Roderick, and

both of them, shading their eyes from the dazzling glory, stood watching it, till the descending sun, suddenly touching the verge of the mist, plunged into it and disappeared.

"Is all ended?"

"Not quite," said Silence; "wait a minute more." And through the death-like greyness which had fallen instantaneously upon mountains, lake, and sky, he perceived a gradual, wonderful change. "See!" She spoke in English, and touching him—the lightest possible touch, yet it thrilled through every nerve—pointed to the mountains nearest the sunset.

What a sight! Slowly a faint colour, like a blush, crept over the "everlasting snows," deepening more and more as it

spread from summit to summit along the whole range of Alps.

"It looks as if an angel were stepping from peak to peak with a basket of roses."

"Yes," Roderick answered, also beneath his breath; "only their colour is not like earthly roses. We shall never see the like again till we see it in paradise. Please God we may!"

As he said the *we*, deliberately, markedly, intentionally, he saw a faint trembling in the sweet mouth, firmly closed though it was; and coming a little closer he took hold—not of her hand, but of her dress. Like a revelation, which some will no more believe in than a blind man could believe in that wondrous sight before these two,

there came into him—perhaps into both—the love, the one passionate, yet pure and perfect love, of one man for one woman, which, if both have strength to accept and be true to its blessedness, makes all life a joy, and death itself no longer a fear.

For even then, standing close beside her, with the mere touch of her garments and the stirring of her hair giving him a rapture indescribable, Roderick could think of death, of his own dead. Strangely enough the first words he said were—

"Oh, if my father could but have seen this sight!"

"Perhaps he does see it, and mine too. They were friends when they were young."

"Yes. And we? We must be friends all our lives."

"I hope so."

"Friend" was the only word he dared to say—a wiser word than he was aware of; for friends may be lovers some day, but lovers who are not friends will soon cease to be both.

The "colorisation" slowly faded, and that cold, grey, deathly shade which comes so suddenly after sunset here began to creep over sky and lake and mountains—even over Silence's face; till there came into those far-away eyes of hers an expression—Roderick could have imagined it that of an angel standing by a sealed grave, but looking upwards still, waiting for the resurrection day.

Love, like death, has its euthanasia—moments which seem to bridge the gulf between mortal and immortal, or in which, from some great height of joy or woe, we see our whole life spread out, before us and behind. But soon we drop from this high mountain into the common-place valley of daily existence, and trudge along quiet as heretofore.

A few minutes after Rodcrick followed Silence down the hill, which she descended as she had mounted, with a boy on either hand, and all went back to tea—that simple Swiss tea which he had long since begun to prefer to the grandest of Richerden dinners. Very pleasant it was, but quite common-place, with Silence cutting bread-and-butter for the boys, who evi-

dently adored her with all their school-boy hearts, or waiting sedulously on her mother, who lay on the sofa, saying only she was "very tired," and smiling still, but plainly more ailing than usual.

Dull too, to a certain extent, was the journey home, for Silence had neither eyes, ears, nor thoughts for any creature except her mother; and Roderick, in the re-action after strong suppressed feeling, half fancied himself *de trop*. Shrinking into a corner, he scarcely spoke to either, but soothed himself by taking the tenderest silent care of both mother and daughter till he deposited them at their own door.

That kindly "Bon soir!"—"Au revoir!" —just the ordinary adieu which had taken place at that door so many times; this

time it was almost briefer than usual, for he saw Silence was glad to get her mother home; and he, too, was not sorry to rush away, afraid lest the strong self-repression of the last few hours might give way, and betray him by some unguarded look or tone. So he hurried down the stairs, having seen them safe, but scarcely looked at either, scarcely even answered Madame Jardine's gentle "Au revoir!"

"Au revoir!" How strange it all felt afterwards!

CHAPTER VII.

Earth once more.

RODERICK scarcely slept all night —a new experience to his young healthy nature; or, sleeping, woke fancying he was falling down precipices, or Silence was falling, and he was leaping in after her—all those vague troubles in which dreams carry out the prominent idea of the day.

He rose gladly, but only rose to vexation; no letter from his mother, but one

from the family lawyer, saying Mrs. Jardine had been consulting with him, and that she altogether objected to her son's denuding himself of his patrimony, the only absolute property he possessed, and giving it to unknown foreign cousins, who might "make ducks and drakes of it" in no time.

Spite of his annoyance, Roderick could not help laughing. The idea of Silence and her mother as extravagant spendthrifts, bringing to ruin the Jardine inheritance, was too comical. He had not been lucid enough, and must write again and explain—what? If he told his mother the whole truth, that he had deliberately made up his mind, and meant, if by God's blessing he was fortunate in

his love, to bring her home as a daughter-in-law this portionless Swiss girl—probably the very last daughter-in-law she would have expected or desired—how would she take it? What would happen?

In this serious business light he had never before regarded the question; and, though it perplexed him, it gave him also a delicious sense of reality. His nebulous passion was resolving itself into the clear, steady glow of a fixed love, a love meant to end in those solemn duties of married life, which all good men are born for, and good women too; and which neither sex can shirk, or set aside, or by any sad fate lose, without involving a certain incompleteness in character and destiny.

"Yes; I must write again to my

mother," he said to himself, and even took up pen and paper.

But how to write? That tender confidence—from babyhood to manhood—which sometimes exists between mother and son, had never existed here. "She would not understand." And the pen fell, and the mind drifted off into airy dreams.

At last he decided that to tell his mother all about his future wife, whom he had never yet, by word or sign, asked to be his wife—and who might never love him after all—would be an unwise, even an indelicate thing. A girl's sensitive pride might well revolt at his having taken it for granted he had but to ask and to have.

"I, who if she only knew it am not worthy to tie her shoe-string. I, so lazy, so thoughtless, so full of myself; while she—she never thinks of herself from morning till night. Oh! my darling! my darling!"

And, midst all his insane adoration of his goddess, there came into the young man's heart a rift of true manly tenderness—the taking care of a woman, the making of her not only his angel, but his "darling."

"I must go and see her, just to find out if she is not over-tired, or over-anxious about her mother."

Glad of this, or any other excuse that brought him to the sweet presence, which was becoming as necessary to him as daily

food, he sallied out, threading delightfully the muddy streets, and leaping, two steps at once, up the familiar stairs.

Half-way he met the three demoiselles Reynier, who told him that Madame Jardine was "au lit," and Silence "très occupée." And a slight smile which he fancied he saw on their faces at his evident disappointment made the young man decide on turning back with them at once, and making himself as agreeable as possible to these pleasant young ladies, all the way home.

He was not conceited, young Roderick Jardine. Whatever his faults were, the petty vanity of liking to have his name coupled with that of some "nice girl" had never been one of them. Now, more than

ever, was he to the last degree sensitive on this head. That her friends should smile or joke, or guess in the smallest way that Silence was dear to him, till he had told her herself how dear she was—the thing was horrible and unendurable!

With a self-control that did him credit—for his young cheek changed and his heart beat like a woman's all the while—he carried on gay badinage with these gay Swiss girls, telling them, quite unconcernedly, the whole story of yesterday, and answering, as frankly as possible, their questions about his sister's marriage, and his much-to-be-regretted, but quite inevitable departure home, till they went indoors, satisfied that he had no matrimonial intentions of his own whatever;

these English were so very peculiar!

He was peculiar, even among Englishmen. When he quitted these fair maidens, having thrown as much dust in their eyes as conscience and truth permitted, he wandered about the little town, restless as a man who has picked up a diamond, which he can neither wear nor show—which he dreads anyone's seeing, and yet feels as if everybody must know of the treasure he proudly hides.

With all its remaining uncertainty he was wildly happy in his secret. His fate was in his own hands—a man's fate in love always is, as no woman's ever can be. He could speak—he could woo—he could plead—with the passionate resolve that continually works out its own ends.

"Love me or love me not, I love you; and I shall love you for ever."

And he felt within him the strength of a man who loves—not himself, but the woman who has become to him a nobler and dearer self—for whom even the desire of possession fades before the ideal worship of the ideal woman. That mean but too common thought,

> "If she be not fair for me,
> What care I how fair she be?"

never entered this young fellow's mind. She was herself; he was himself; and, whatever happened to either, he could not choose but love her, and love her to the end.

I do not say this kind of love is to be found every day, or in every man; but it

is possible to some men, and it was the only form of the passion that was possible to such a man as Roderick Jardine.

But it was a passion, not a mere sentimental fancy. He had written poetry in his time, but he wrote none now. In his walks up and down—from sheer restlessness he walked nearly all day long—he avoided the street where she lived, lest anybody might notice him; and his mind kept running continually, not upon dreams, but practicalities—things he had never taken any heed of before—what was the exact amount of his own independent income; where he should live; and how, also, supposing he could not reconcile his mother to this plan of divesting himself of Miss Jardine's money before marriage, in

what way he could best do it afterwards.

For the natural instinct of a generous man—to give his wife everything, to shelter her from all possible injury or wrong—had come, in all its passionate intensity, into Roderick's heart, sweeping away selfish greed, pleasure-loving folly—all the little demons that are so prone to enter into empty chambers. He had none. There was not a corner of his being which she had not possessed herself of, in undoubted sovereignty, "my Queen!—my Queen!"

He hummed it continually, this little silly song, yet felt himself the wisest of mortals; and many a worldly-wise old man, looking back on a similar passage of existence, may incline to say, with a sigh,

"Who knows? perhaps he may have been."

Now and then a qualm came over him. Was all this castle-building real? Suppose a girl's light "No" should make all the fabric crumble into dust? But she was not one who did anything lightly. You had but to look into her eyes and see that no coquetry was possible to her. Nor indecision either. She would be quite sure to know her own mind. She would either love or not love; and, if she did love, it would be for ever.

Though he had no tangible grounds whatever to go upon—not a look, not a word—except that brief reply, uttered with downcast eyes and a tremble in the voice, when he wished they might be

friends for life—"I hope we may"—still somehow he felt that she liked—perhaps loved him. In later life, when the worldly crust grows over both, it may be different; but these two—mere boy and girl as it were—they had neither deceits nor disguises. Beyond the natural solemnity of asking the question on the answer to which depends the whole future of one—nay, two lives—Roderick was not afraid.

Nevertheless, in writing to his mother, as he at last did write, determining to pay her the just filial respect of telling her his intentions before he made the offer of marriage, he explained that he had no idea what Mademoiselle Jardine's answer would be; and he begged her to keep his

secret entirely to herself until he could tell her the result.

A plain, brief, and very business-like letter it was, taking entirely for granted that his mother loved him well enough to rejoice in his happiness; and yet a lurking fear would come.

"If only she"—the one she in the world now—"had more style; if she dressed better, as the girls would say," thought he to himself, with a return of that fraternal cynicism to which he had been liable, but which he had almost forgotten since he came to Neuchâtel—since he saw those heavenly, innocent eyes. They rose up before him now. "Oh! my darling—made of every creature's best—forgive!"

And the ties of blood, which do not

necessarily include sympathy, seemed slender and poor compared with those of what philosophers call "elective affinity," which the lover finds, or thinks he has found, in his mistress, and which, if he does not afterwards find in his wife, God help him! for it makes life very hard.

"So the deed is done—thus far," said Roderick to himself, as he posted the letter, and then braced his courage for the next step. For he judged rightly—no English wooing, trusting to sweet chance and the impulse of the moment, would do here. He must speak to the mother first. Until he won her approval he could never be to Silence more, ostensibly, than a common acquaintance.

Trying, but inevitable. So that very

evening—giving the gentle invalid a whole day to recover from her fatigue—he determined to present himself, and ask formally of Madame Jardine permission to woo her daughter. Perhaps he might then be allowed to tell Silence himself all she was to him. And when she understood it—the first look, eye to eye; the first kiss, mouth to mouth; the open, mutual recognition of a love that was to last them through life, and go with them, please God, into the life eternal—at the bare thought of such bliss the young man felt almost dizzy.

He half staggered as he walked, and at last stood quite still at the solitary street corner—the street he knew so well—to command himself before he attempted to

mount the stair. Though it was still early, all was dark—the quiet darkness of a mild November night, with the stars shining overhead. Roderick looked up at them, trying to gain a little quietness too.

So standing, he scarcely noticed a gentleman, almost as self-absorbed as himself, till they ran right against one another.

"Pardon, monsieur," said the kindly voice of M. le Professeur Reynier. "What, Monsieur Jardine—can it be you? How fortunate! I was just coming to pay you a little visit."

Roderick muttered some civil answer, but did not offer to turn back. Indeed, he had come to that point when he felt he could not turn back—could not defer his

bliss, or fate, another hour, for any mortal creature.

"I—another time I shall be most happy. Now—I have an engagement."

"Pardon again," said the gentle old man, touching the arm of the younger one; "but—were you going there?" He pointed up the stair which he had just descended. "Indeed, you must not go!"

"Why not?" said Roderick, angrily; then, recollecting himself, added, with a careful indifference: "your daughters told me Madame Jardine was not well; I was going to inquire for her."

"Mon Dieu!" cried Monsieur Reynier, clasping his hands with a gesture which we unemotional islanders would smile at

as "so un-English!" "Mon Dieu!—then monsieur does not know?"

"Know what?"

"She is dead—she died this morning."

"She—who?"

"Madame Jardine, alas! It was quite sudden—there was nobody beside her but her daughter. Quite peaceful, too—without any suffering; and the doctor had dreaded much one day, for it was disease of the heart. Her child's only thought now is thankfulness for that. Poor Mademoiselle Silence! Madame Reynier is with her now—she, or my girls, will not leave her until the interment."

Here the old man fairly gave way, took out his pocket-handkerchief, and wiped his honest eyes. Roderick wrung his hand

in the silent English way—no more. He was utterly stunned.

"I know monsieur will think I am very foolish, but I cannot help it. My old friend's widow—and she so good a woman—and only four days since she was at our house. Indeed, I saw her for a few moments yesterday. She had some idea—yes, I think she always had a faint idea—that at any moment she might be taken. More than once has she confided to me, in such a case, her dear child, whom she leaves alone in the world. But Silence does not feel that yet—she does not think of herself at all. 'Never mind me; the good God will take care of me!' was all she said, looking up with that piteous pale face and those big eyes, when I left her, not five minutes ago."

Roderick stood absolutely silent. The stream of gentle, querulous French seemed to run into his brain and out again, leaving no distinct impression there. It had been such a bright dream-life since he came to the little town, and the Reynier family were mixed up in it all. It seemed impossible that upon this pleasantness outside, this inner passion just coming to its climax, its struggle of hope and fear, could fall the paralyzing hand of Death.

"It can't be true! it can't be true!" he said in English, putting his hand to his head.

"Monsieur is very much shocked, I see; and no wonder. I, too, can scarcely comprehend or believe it. But we must leave all in the hands of the good God.

He will take care of her, as she said, poor child! even though she is left an orphan, without any *dot*, without a penny in the world. But I will not detain monsieur any longer. Bon soir! Au revoir!"

The very words she had said to him in her brief adieu, only two nights before on this very spot—the sweet soul who was now "beyond the sun." Roderick's heart gave way, with a great sob, like a child's.

And then he choked it down and turned away. To no human being would he betray himself—not now.

"Monsieur," and he drew the old man's arm through his with a tender courtesy, "you will allow me to accompany you home. Then perhaps I may be honoured

by hearing a little more—perhaps assisting you in the arrangements you will have to make. Remember I am a relative—I believe, the very nearest relative now left to Mademoiselle Jardine."

"Yes, yes, yes; I am very grateful. And she, too, poor child! she cannot but be grateful also for monsieur's goodness. Let us go."

So they went together—the old man talking volubly and cordially, the younger one replying in little more than monosyllables, through the already empty streets of the little town.

CHAPTER VIII.

Death in the House.

THERE are two kinds of love—man's love; I am not speaking of woman's just now. The first, born of sunshiny selfism, basking in pleasure, shrinking from any pain, either its own or that of the object beloved, which is, for the time being, itself; the second, strong as tender, while equally capable of pleasure, fears not pain, either personal or vicarious. Sorrow, suffering, the help-

lessness of failing powers, only rouse in it a deeper passion, a fonder care. Happy the woman who has found her resting-place there! She need fear neither sickness nor sorrow, old age nor beauty's decline. Living, however sad and broken a life, she will be cherished to the last; and dying, she will be mourned eternally.

Such a love, though he knew it not at the time—indeed, he hardly knew himself at all, so suddenly and strangely had circumstances developed his dormant nature—such a love, in all its devotedness and intensity, had taken possession of Roderick's heart for his "Cousin" Silence.

If, a few hours before, he had been bent upon asking her for his wife, now he almost felt as if she were his wife; as if

Fate, stepping in, had absolutely thrown her into his arms. He held her there—fast, fast. No earthly power, except her own will, should ever drag her thence or put her from him.

But he was still quite silent, as was inevitable. Though he stayed all the evening with the Reyniers, he never betrayed himself by a single word. Instead of going to bed he went back to the street where she lived, and walked up and down it till long after midnight, watching the faint glimmer of light in the upper rooms which told that there was death in the house.

He tried to fancy her sitting there; either in the silent chamber where, they said, she best liked to be, quiet and tear-

less, or in the salon beside good Madame Reynier, who had cut out for her a plain black dress, and set her to work at it, feeling that doing even that was better for her than doing nothing. Her principal thought, Sophie Reynier said, seemed to be to give as little trouble as possible to anybody.

"Oh, she is an angel!" the warm-hearted Swiss girl had cried, with her tears down-dropping as she spoke. And Roderick had forgotten himself so far as to turn and grasp her hand gratefully—this good eldest sister of a large family, already betrothed to a young pasteur. Perhaps that made her at once clear-sighted and wise, for she half smiled through her tears, and said nothing.

It did not matter: all small outside things seemed to matter little now. What the Reynier family thought of him, his feelings or intentions, Roderick did not know, nor did he much care. He had listened calmly while they talked her over; speculated how much she would have to live upon; finally decided that she should be asked to come and stay with them after the funeral, and remain with them till she could get a situation as governess—"perhaps in England, as she knows English so well, monsieur might hear of something?" And monsieur had answered "yes" with the greatest calmness, hugging himself in his own speechless content.

Helpless, poor, with not a friend in the world except these kind Reyniers: it was

exactly what he would most have desired! Certain young fellows of his acquaintance, who never committed themselves to the smallest attentions before finding out whether or not a girl had "lots of money," would, he knew, have regarded him with contemptuous pity—but he? To snatch up his penniless darling just as she was, to shelter her in his bosom, to load her with luxuries, to make her his one object of ceaseless tenderness and devoted care, seemed to him the acme of human felicity!

He did not attempt to see her—that, of course, was impossible: and he felt capable of making any sacrifice, or exercising any self-restraint for her sake: but it seemed as if only to be near her, throwing over her the faithful shield of his silent

love, was at once a consolation and a protection.

He walked the street till all lights went out, except that solemn one which marked the death-chamber; and then, with a blessing on his lips and a prayer in his heart—young man as he was, Roderick was not ashamed to pray—he departed.

Next morning, at the very earliest hour he could venture without exciting suspicion, he was at the Reyniers' door, to hear all that was to be heard concerning Mademoiselle Jardine, and to volunteer any help that he delicately could to the professeur—who, he saw, was a little perplexed and unpractical—in arranging the details of the funeral. Nay, it being a pelting wet day, and the old man very

rheumatic, he succeeded in being allowed himself to go and choose the grave, in the pretty cemetery which all the Neuchâtellerois are so proud of, and where he had been taken by Madame Jardine herself, one sunshiny Sunday afternoon, almost the first Sunday he came to the town.

How long that seemed ago; and how strange it was that he should be standing there, choosing a resting-place for this dear dead woman, of whose very existence he was ignorant a few weeks ago! Yet now he mourned her almost like a son, and thought of her solemnly, tenderly, as the mother of his wife to be, if God gave him that blessing. Perhaps, looking even farther than that, into the dim future, his

thoughts ran on, as human thoughts will run on. But he stopped them.

"Oh, my darling, my darling!" Somehow he never now thought of her as anything but his "darling." "If you give yourself to me I will be faithful to the trust. God do so to me, and more also;" unconsciously he used the familiar Bible phrase, and spoke half aloud, as if, in the total solitude, the spirit of the yet unburied dead were listening to him out of her strange new heaven. "May God forsake me in my need if ever I forsake this orphan child!"

He was but a few years her senior, yet she seemed a child and he a man, now. He had grown ten years older in the last twenty-four hours.

Coming back to the Reyniers, he explained all he had done in the most matter-of-fact and unemotional way. He seemed suddenly to have gained the power of unlimited self-restraint, for her sake. To do everything for her that could possibly be done, and never to let her know it, was all he desired.

The tidings of her were just the same; an English person would have said she was "keeping up well." To these warm-hearted, demonstrative Swiss she appeared passive, almost cold. It was her Scotch blood, they said, which had always made her a little unlike themselves. But more like him and his, thought Roderick, more like the Silence Jardine with whose very name, and, he fancied, much of her very

nature, she would appear at Blackhall.

The third day was arranged for the funeral. The only communication that passed between him and Mademoiselle Jardine had been a request he sent by Sophie Reynier, that he might be allowed to attend it, in right of relationship, and Silence sent him word back that she was "grateful."

This done, there was no more to do for her; nothing but to wander restlessly about through the long dreary winter day, and wonder how she was bearing it; whether he would ever be able to make the world feel like summer to her again. Instead of his passion—or, rather, underneath his passion—had come a tenderness almost motherly. He could have sat and

watched—watched and guarded—never asking for word or look, indifferent even to responsive love, if only he might have the right to love *her*. The very hardest bit to him of all this time was those few hours when, having done all that was possible for him to do, and having no excuse for inflicting himself further on the Reynier family, he went back to his hotel and tried to lead his ordinary life there—eating, drinking, and sleeping; for he had no young men's small vices; he thought billiards dull, and detested smoking. He could not, this night, even read; and it was not until he woke next morning that it occurred to him he ought to write again to his mother, who would just be receiving his letter of two days before.

Another two days, and he would get an answer. Best so, perhaps. In the few words that he was determined at all hazards to say to his darling before he left—to herself only, regardless of ceremony or custom—the sanction of his mother's approbation would be a help and a consolation. He should be able to tell the orphan that it was not his arms alone that were open to receive her, but those of a new mother, ready to replace, if any ever could replace, in some small degree her who was gone. Very unlike they were, and he had a secret fear that it was a different sort of a daughter-in-law Mrs. Jardine would have preferred—one much grander, richer, handsomer. Silence had the loveliness of lovableness; but even in

his wildest passion, her lover knew she was not handsome. Still, in spite of all, there were two things he never doubted to find in his mother—her strong good sense and her warm heart.

To these he trusted, and felt he might safely trust, the girl he loved—the girl who would make him all he lacked, all that his mother wished him to be. He pleaded this in a letter, touchingly earnest and tender, which, on second thoughts, he determined on writing home. His heart was full—full to overflowing; and, almost for the first time in his life, he poured it out where, under such circumstances, every good son is right to pour his heart out—into his mother's bosom.

Going to the post, letter in hand—for

he had learnt Silence's habit of doing things at once, and doing them herself, if possible—he met Sophie Reynier, in mourning dress, hastening to comfort and sustain her friend during the funeral day.

"Is it not rather sad," she said, "that this should be such a lovely day? Look at the lake; it is blue as heaven; and the Alps, they are all *découverts*. Ah, such a day as our poor Madame Jardine always enjoyed so much; and she is to be buried this afternoon!"

Roderick did not reply.

"See, I am taking these few flowers—all I can get—to lay on her breast before the coffin is closed. She was so fond of flowers, as she was of everything beautiful.

And she looks so beautiful now, you cannot imagine; and quite young again. Even poor Silence does not weep when we stand beside her. Ah, it is a certain consolation—the beauty one often sees in *les morts.*"

"I have never yet seen death," said Roderick, walking back with her. "Strange at my age; but so it is. I was very ill after my father died; they would not let me look at him again, and I have never known any other loss."

"Monsieur is fortunate—exceptionally fortunate."

"I do not know that. Those are blessed who, like you, mademoiselle, have an instinct for sorrow, who go about comforting all the afflicted of this world.

One cannot do that unless one understands."

"Perhaps not," said gentle Sophie Reynier, of whom he had only spoken the simple truth; but of everyone near Silence, Roderick was disposed to think and speak the very pleasantest truth he could.

As they walked, he was seized with a great longing to behold once more the face of the dead—the face which had never looked on him but kindly—*her* mother's face, which would so soon pass away from every remembrance except hers—and his.

"Do you think you could take me into the house with you?" he pleaded. "Nobody would know, or be harmed thereby. In my country we even think it a tribute of respect to the dead to be allowed to

look at them once more." And Mademoiselle Jardine——"

Sophie Reynier suddenly turned to him with a flash of womanly emotion in her kind blue eyes—penetrating as kind.

"Monsieur, you are an honest man—what in England you call a 'gentleman.' You could never act otherwise than kindly to such a defencëless creature as Mademoiselle Jardine?"

"God forbid, no!"

"Then I will take you."

CHAPTER IX.

Death and Love.

SILENT as death itself, but with his heart beating in passionate life, Roderick stood beside Mademoiselle Reynier at the familiar door. Madame Reynier was gone out.

"So you cannot possibly come in with me, monsieur," said the grave little Sophie. "But let us see. Return in an hour, at eleven; by then I shall have persuaded Silence to repose herself for

a little. She has not slept all night, and is very restless. She may hear you. Now go away, I pray you."

He obeyed at once, and went to search through the little town for a few more winter flowers, to "shut them inside the sweet, cold hand," like Browning's "Evelyn Hope," saying to himself the lines,—

"So, that is our secret. Go to sleep:
You will wake and remember and understand."

For, to his dreamy nature, death had as yet appeared only in its poetic side—its pathos and its mystery. The darkness and desolation of loss, the sad realities of sickness and mortality, were to him unknown, as they are to most young men. During these two days he had a little come into the shadow of them, but only in

a secondary degree, and all under the glamour of his passionate love, which hallowed everything with a kind of supernatural glory.

As he stood in the salon of his hotel, arranging the little bouquet, and tying it up with a bit of white ribbon which he had gone into a shop and bought, his look was tender rather than sad, and, with all his reverence for the dead, he could not forbear thinking whether she—his living love—would notice the flowers, or ask who put them there.

"Monsieur, a telegram for monsieur!"

It startled him for the moment. Not being a man of business, Roderick was unaccustomed to telegrams; besides, his mother had a strong, old-fashioned aver-

sion to them. Yet this one came from her. At least, the address and name were hers, though the wording was in the third person.

"*Your mother is not well. Come home immediately.*"

This was all: but it came with such a blow to Roderick, who inherited his father's nervous temperament, that he felt himself turning dizzy, and obeyed the friendly garçon's suggestion that monsieur had better sit down.

His mother ill? She, the healthiest person imaginable! and she had written to him only a few days before, saying nothing of herself except of her endless duties and engagements. It must be something serious. He was wanted "im-

mediately." She could not have got his letter, there was indeed barely time, or surely she would have answered it. Perhaps she was too ill even to read it? His poor mother—his dear, good mother! All the son in him woke up: perhaps all the more for thinking of that other mother, whose dead face he was just going to see.

He might go—there was time; no Paris train started till afternoon, and, re-reading the telegram, it seemed a little less serious; though "not well" might be only a tender way of breaking to him a far sadder truth.

"O mother, mother!" he almost sobbed out, as he walked hastily along the lake-side, "if anything should happen to you!

If I should lose you too, before I have learned to love you half enough."

And all the passionate remorse of a sensitive nature, a doubly sensitive conscience, rose up in the poor fellow's heart. He accused himself of a hundred imaginary shortcomings, and suffered as those are prone to suffer who judge others by the standard of themselves. It was only by a great effort that he controlled himself so as to present the quiet outside necessary, on reaching Madame Jardine's door.

Madame Jardine's door, from which she would soon go for ever; nay, from which she had already gone. He knew not whom to ask for. He stood silent and bewildered; but the little *bonne* seemed

to understand, and admitted him without a word.

Beyond the salon was a small bed-chamber, which mother and daughter used to share. In the centre of it stood, raised a little, and covered with something white, that last sleeping-place in which we must all one day rest.

But it was not in the least like sleep; as when, left quite alone, he approached the coffin and drew the face-cloth gently off, the young man acknowledged with a start. No human slumber, but total, perfect, divine repose; where all the anguish of life had been smoothed away, all the passions of life calmed down as if they had never existed.

His passion, only a minute before at

fever-heat, listening eagerly for any sound in the silent house, suddenly sank into peace. *Something* was before him, beside him, around him; something which in all his days before he had never felt or understood. Life with its noisy clangours melted away before the eternal peace of death.

How long he stood there gazing on the still face, so exceedingly beautiful—he had never thought before what a beautiful woman she must once have been—Roderick could not tell. At last the door, which had been left ajar behind him, slightly stirred. He thought it was the *bonne*, and would not turn; he did not wish her to see his dimmed eyes.

It was more than a minute before he

looked up and saw, standing quietly on the other side of the coffin, the orphaned girl, the girl whom he adored like a lover, and yet seemed to cherish already with the protecting tenderness of a husband who has been married many years.

Perfectly pallid, dead-white almost, from the contrast between her black dress and fair hair, Silence stood and looked at him; merely looked, not holding out her hand—both her hands were resting on the coffin. She spoke in a whisper.

"You are come to see her once again? That is kind. She always liked you. Is she not beautiful? But she is gone, you see! She has gone away, and left me all alone."

One sob; just one, no more. Nothing in his life had ever touched Roderick like the strong self-command by which this frail girl in her utmost agony controlled its expression, and, recollecting herself, summoned all her courage, dignity—the sacred dignity of sorrow, which asks no help, no consolation.

"You must forgive me; my grief is new. Are these your flowers? Thank you; they are very sweet."

And, taking them from him, she began arranging them in the folds of the shroud, gently and carefully, as if she were dressing a baby, then drew the kerchief once more over the dead face.

"Now you must go away."

"I will," he answered—the first words

he had uttered. "Only, just once." Tenderly removing the face-cloth again, Roderick stooped and pressed his lips upon the marble brow of this dead mother, inly making a solemn vow—would that all men made the same, and kept it to other dead and living mothers!

Something of its purport must have been betrayed in his look, for, when his eyes met those of the girl opposite, she slightly started, and a faint colour suffused her cheek. Fading, it left her deadly pale; she staggered rather than walked, though alone, refusing all help, into the next room.

There she sat down, Roderick standing beside her. The door was open between, he could see the foot of the coffin, and

its white drapery. Though now, for the first time, he was alone with his chosen love, knowing well, and having an instinct that she must know too, that she was his love, and ever would be, there was so great an awe upon him that he could not speak one word, not even of the commonest consolation or sympathy. He could have fallen on his knees before her and kissed her very feet, yet he dared not touch even the tips of her poor little pallid fingers, so strangely idle, their occupation gone.

"What am I to do without my mother?" Silence said, at last, with a piteous appeal, not to him, or to anybody, except, perhaps, that One to whom alone the orphan can always go.

Roderick could bear it no longer; his manhood wholly deserted him. He turned away his head and wept. The two sat there ever so long, sobbing like children; and, like children—how it came about he hardly knew—holding one another's hands. That was all! No more indeed was possible, but it seemed to comfort her. Very soon she rose from her chair, quite herself—her quiet, grave self, robed in all the dignity of sorrow.

"Thank you; you have been very kind in coming to-day, and in wishing to come this afternoon, as I hope you will."

Roderick had forgotten all about the telegram and his mother—everything in the world except Silence Jardine.

He drew the paper out of his pocket

and laid it before her. "Read this! I got it half an hour ago. Say, what must I do?"

Silence read slowly, and putting her hand once or twice over her forehead, as if trying hard to understand things, then looked up at him with compassionate eyes.

"Your mother ill? I am so sorry for you." Then, after a minute's pause, "You will go—and at once?"

"Yes; at once."

Both spoke in whispers still, as if conscious of some sacred presence close beside them. He was, at least, feeling this; as if a soft, dead hand were laid on his wildly-beating heart, and sealing his passionate lips, else he could not

possibly have controlled himself as he did.

"I feel I ought to go. But my mother may be better soon. She is very seldom ailing. As soon as ever I can, I shall come back again to Neuchâtel—to you. You believe that?"

"Yes." One little word, uttered softly, with bent head, and, after an instant, repeated, "Yes."

Roderick felt his brain almost whirling with the strong constraint he put upon himself.

"One thing more you shall decide," he said. "The train starts this afternoon at the very hour when I ought to be—you know where. Shall I delay my journey—just for one day?"

"Not for an hour!" Silence answered, almost passionately. "Remember, you never can have but one mother. Go to her at once!"

And so he went, without another word, scarcely another look; he dared not trust himself to either. Another minute, and he should have snatched the girl in his arms, forgetting the dead mother close by, or the living presence of Sophie Reynier, who just then entered—forgetting everything in the wide world except that he *must* have her, must shelter her in his bosom, and tell her that there was her one home for ever, that he would die for her—or, better still, live for her—the only woman in the world who could make life worth having. Frantic—im-

petuous vow! made by how many lovers, and kept by how few!

But it was not made now. The two or three minutes he stayed were occupied in explaining to Sophie Reynier about the telegram, his mother's illness, his compelled journey, and his certain return as soon as possible.

"You will say all this to M. Reynier? And I shall find *her* with you when I come back?"

"Certainly. Yes."

"You will take care of her?"

"I will."

He looked at kind Sophie. There was the tender light of her love for her own good young pasteur shining in her eyes. "Thank you!" Roderick took her hand and kissed it, and was gone.

Gone—without the slightest explanation or promise on either side. Still he did not feel unsatisfied. Though he left her free, he was himself bound. It is not troth-plight that creates love. Often the pledges kept longest and faithfullest are those which were never made.

No actual confession had he won—it could not be. But her little cold hand had clung to his a moment, and she had uttered, unhesitatingly, her soft, firm "Yes," implying that trust which is a man's best pride, a woman's safest refuge—for love without trust is a broken reed.

Above all, she had bidden him go, had helped him to do his duty. Roderick remembered once hearing his father say

that the deepest tenderness a woman can show to a man is to help him to do his duty. Though he was going away, going far out of sight of her sweet presence into what seemed a lonely wilderness of a world—Roderick was not unhappy.

He had no time for much thinking about himself—trains wait for no man—and there were a good many preparations for his sudden quitting of the dear little town which had grown quite home-like to him. Even the honest garçon at the hotel looked triste at the departure of "ce monsieur anglais," who had always been so pleasant and kind to everybody, and felt a certain consolation, which, indeed, Roderick himself shared, as if it were a sort of paction with Providence,

when he decided only to pack his valise, leaving the best part of his luggage behind him.

Thus independent of "bagage" he could easier rush from station to station —so as not to lose a moment on his journey home; for he had determined not to stop, either for sleep or food, if he could help it, till he found himself at Richerden.

Those plaintive words, "You never can have but one mother," seemed continually to ring in his ears, rousing him to all his forgotten duties, his dormant affections. He had never felt himself so much her son as now, when he was about to bring to his mother a new daughter.

And such a daughter! "Soon, soon

they will all feel how good she is; how she will help me to be good. My darling! my only darling!"

And as, all in the rainy dark, he whirled through the Val de Travers, watching dreamily the black outlines of the ravine which he had passed in mid-day sunshine such a little while ago—yet it seemed half a lifetime—and thought of her, sitting in the empty house, the poor motherless child! his whole heart melted over her—that full, tender, manly heart out of which the lonely self-absorption—only that, not selfishness—and the restless yearning, had alike slipped away. It was not merely that he had found

"His spirit's mate, compassionate and wise,"

every man in love finds this, or fancies he has found it; but some divine instinct told him he had also found a helpmeet—a creature not only to love, but to believe in—not only to cherish, but to rest upon; the sort of woman of whom it is said, "The heart of her husband may safely trust in her: she will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life."

There are women the love of whom, and their love, given or returned, is a curse to any man; but when Roderick, having sat wakeful all night, endlessly thinking, just before dawn dropped into a fitful, brief sleep, the last word he murmured to himself was, "My blessing, my blessing!" It was true.

Catching the morning mail from Paris,

he reached London the same night. His twenty-four hours' journey made him feel excessively tired; for though perfectly healthy he had not the robustness of some at his age—would always be the sort of man who is the better for a woman's quiet, watchful care in small things. Strong emotion especially always took the life out of him in a painful way, till he was half ashamed of feeling so ill for nothing. Catching sight of himself in an hotel mirror he quite started.

"She would think I looked like a ghost."

And the new delicious sensation—of the duty of taking care of one's self, of regarding "even wretched meat and drink," if one be "dear to some one else"

—came upon him till he actually blushed, like a girl admiring her own beauty because it is pleasant in other eyes—and —ordered his supper!

The temptation was strong to go to bed and sleep; he was so very tired, and the London hotel was so quiet and comfortable; besides, it was rather pleasant to hear his native tongue about him once more. But no; *she* had bidden him not to delay an hour; and every hour, as he drew nearer home, his sensitive temperament shrank with a vague dread from some sort of formless evil that might be awaiting him there. And in his secret heart Roderick a little shrank from pain.

"I am not half as brave as she," he

thought. "I should have to go through life 'with all my nerves outside,' as I once heard somebody say, if I had not her to help me. But I shall have her, thank God! Only a brief time—as brief as I can make it—and I will have you, my darling!"

Meantime he did as he knew Silence would have wished him to do—gathered up all his strength of body and mind, and took the night mail to Richerden.

He got there about four in the morning—a thorough Richerden morning, or rather night, of sleet and snow and blinding rain. Entirely worn out with fatigue, he came at last to his mother's door.

For the moment he hardly believed it was his mother's, but that he must have

made some egregious mistake. For the house was all lighted up, carriages were going and coming, daintily muffled figures filled the entrance-hall—it was evidently the breaking up of some festive entertainment.

He had pictured to himself the silent house—the night of anxious vigil over sickness—death; for even that last terror had, as he neared home, forced itself upon his weakened nerves. Instead, he came in at the end of a ball!

"My mother—how is my mother?" were the first words that passed his lips—they had been knelling themselves into his tired brain for the last hundred miles.

There she was, standing half-way up

the staircase, in her ruby velvet, point lace, and all ablaze with diamonds—a little tired and old-looking, as was natural at four in the morning, but beaming with health, good-nature, and the exuberant enjoyment of life.

What a contrast to the dead mother whom he had left in her coffin so many hundred miles away!

Waiting for a pause in the stream of guests, Roderick hid himself behind the shadow of the door, till Mrs. Jardine's voice, loud and hearty, had repeated a series of hospitable adieus. Thence he emerged, a somewhat forlorn figure, into the brilliant glare of light.

"Goodness me, Rody! is that you, my dearest boy? Girls, your brother is here."

She wrapped him in a voluminous embrace, and kissed him many times with true maternal warmth.

"Mother, you have not been ill? There is nothing wrong with you?"

"No, my darling; what should there be? Oh! I remember—the telegram."

A sudden cloud came over her face, which was repeated with added shadow on her son's.

"Yes, the telegram. I thought you were ill, and I came home, as you bade me, immediately. Never mind. Good night."

"Stop, my dear. Just stop."

But he would not; and went straight upstairs to his own room.

CHAPTER X.

Bluid not thicker than Water.

RODERICK did not appear among his family until the next day, or rather the same day, for it was five in the morning before the last guest departed, and the household sank into quietness. Then Bella Jardine, knocking at his door, had been greeted with a fraternal growl; and the trayful of food which, according to the family faith that the way to the heart is through the stomach, she brought

up to him, was left untasted on the door-mat.

"Let me alone; I will see you all at breakfast," were the only words that could be got out of him. Angry, sorrowful, and utterly worn out in body as well as mind, he threw himself on the bed, in the cold, fireless room—evidently he had not been expected so soon—rolled himself up in a bearskin rug which he had bought at Neuchâtel, in planning that never-to-be-forgotten day at Lausanne, and slept for many hours. Slept so heavily that when he awoke, long after midday, he was surprised to find his fire lit, and a dainty little breakfast standing beside it; also his feet, stretching outside the rug, were carefully wrapped up in one of his mother's shawls.

She had been in his room, then! making him "comfortable" as it was her habit to do, as much as she could—perhaps giving him, unfelt, the kiss that he might not have cared for, the tear which would only have vexed him. Poor mother! And he was her own, her only son.

Roderick was touched. When he came downstairs the first thing he did was to look for her all over the house, and when they met he kissed her affectionately.

"Forgive my being so rude as to go to bed at once; but I was very tired. And you? You have been up, spite of your fatigues, and looking after me as usual? I did so enjoy my nice breakfast! Thank you, mother."

He kissed her again, and then sat

down, not knowing what else to say. Would she speak first, or must he, on the subject which never left his mind for a moment?

"Yes, you were quite wearied out with your long journey, my dear boy," said Mrs. Jardine. "You must have travelled night and day, to have got back so soon."

"Could I do otherwise, thinking you were ill, mother? and naturally I was somewhat astonished——"

"To find us in the middle of a ball?" broke in Bella, who sat surrounded by a heap of wedding finery. "It must have been a little perplexing. But we thought that frightening telegram was the best way to bring you home."

Roderick drew back, flushing angrily.

"Hold your tongue, Bella," said the mother. "But, my dear Rody, I never said I was ill; I only said I was 'not well,' which was quite true. How could it be otherwise, after your letter?"

"You did get my letter, then—my two letters?"

"Yes, both." And there ensued an awkward silence.

Proud, shy, reserved as his nature was, to feel that he had been cheated in this way, treated like a silly school-boy, when his heart was bursting with the strongest passion of manhood, was to Roderick a very severe trial of temper and patience. He stood facing his mother and sister, expecting them to explain, to apologize.

But they did neither; they said nothing, only went on with their occupation, talking together, just as if there was nobody in the room beside themselves.

Possibly this was half pretence, to hide their secret fright, poor women! at what they had done, or were going to do. Perhaps something in the look of the young man warned them that he was a young man, would never be a boy again, not even to his mother. To all parents and all children there does come such a moment, when the Rubicon, once crossed, can be re-crossed no more.

Bella tried to tide over the difficult moment, the *instans tyrannus*, which governs fatally so many a life, by taking it lightly, and calling her brother's attention to her

millinery, her wreath and veil, to be worn in full splendour three days hence.

"Such things are quite out of my line, thank you," said Roderick, coldly. "Mother, I should like to have a little talk with you; but, if you are too much occupied, I—I can wait."

"Oh! yes, wait. There is plenty of time, plenty of time, my dear boy," said Mrs. Jardine, hurriedly, though with an air of exceeding relief, as she turned back to Bella and her "braws."

The critical moment passed, seized, unhappily, by neither side, for Roderick, excessively irritated, walked instantly out of the room, and out of the house.

For an hour or more he paced the streets—the miserable, muddy Richerden

streets, which seemed more miserable than ever now, after the bright "backs of colleges" at Cambridge, and the dear little town of Neuchâtel, where it seemed as if there was always sunshine. He was boiling over with indignation and pain. A storm was coming; he felt it looming in the family atmosphere.

His mother evidently had not taken kindly to the idea of his marriage; there would be a battle to fight. Even if no actual opposition—which he was loath to fear—there was a total lack of sympathy with him; else how could his mother—any mother—being acquainted with all the facts of the case, knowing that her son loved a girl as his very life, yet had left her, with her own mother lying dead, to

rush frantically home, how could she greet him without a word of inquiry, or the slightest show of interest in his affairs, except the chilling remark, "There was no hurry."

"But there is, there shall be. She must hear me; she cannot help it. If she has a heart in her bosom, she will feel for me," he thought, passionately.

Yet when, a few minutes after, he caught sight of her and Bella driving past in their splendid carriage and pair, laughing together so much that they did not even see him at first, Roderick took off his hat to them, his own mother and sister, as distantly as if they had been complete strangers, and turned round a bye-street in indignant disdain.

For, indeed, at the moment they felt like strangers, as far removed as the poles from himself, and from that forlorn girl the image of whom he carried perpetually in his fancy. He saw her flitting along the streets of Neuchâtel in her grey dress and waterproof cloak, her plain black hat with the pretty fair hair curling beneath it; he clasped the vision to his sick, empty heart, feeling that she was nearer to him than any of his own belongings—nearer and dearer than anything in the wide world.

It was so; it could not but be, for it was the natural law of things. "A man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife," thought Roderick, bracing himself up against the worst, for

his imaginative temperament was always prone to leap at once to the very worst, though his innate courage taught him also to face it.

And now he felt glad that he had come back, nominally as free as he went, that no word of mutual confession had passed between him and the object of his love; he did not even know whether she would consent to marry him. Nothing, therefore, could possibly be said against her; upon him only would fall the vials of maternal wrath—if wrath it were, which he could hardly bring himself to believe. It seemed so impossible, so supremely ridiculous, that a young man who could well afford to marry, whom his relations were always urging to marry, should not be left to

choose for himself, especially when choosing such a wife as Silence Jardine.

He murmured over and over again to himself her dear name, not in its French form, as he was accustomed to hear it, though that sounded very sweet, but sweeter still was the English word which she would henceforth be known by—a familiar name, tŏo, in the old family home.

"Oh, father, father! you, at least, would not have blamed me; you would have been glad that I should bring to Blackhall another Silence Jardine."

The thought calmed and comforted him; he felt less angry with his mother; he determined that he would have an explanation with her—a quiet, pacific, filial explanation—that very night.

But it is astonishing how long clever people—and she was a decidedly clever woman in her way, was Mrs. Jardine—can shirk a difficulty, or avoid an unpleasant thing.

He hardly knew how it came about, but Roderick had actually been two whole days at home, taking his place at the foot of his mother's sumptuous table, and entertaining, with gentle courtesy and well-disguised weariness, her endless guests, falling back into old ways so completely that he sometimes asked himself if the last two months were not merely a morning dream; yet not a syllable had been breathed of his intended marriage or of Mademoiselle Jardine.

Did they think he had forgotten her?

Did his mother believe that? or Bella, with her lover paying devoted court to her, in the few short days that would elapse before he dropped into the common-place husband? A regular Richerden husband, Roderick was sure he would turn out to be, and Bella a proper Richerden wife, dressing and dining, paying calls and interchanging gossip, vying in domestic splendour with her two sisters, and getting as much as she could out of her wealthy mother, even though she had married a rich man—had made, as Mrs. Jardine continually declared, the "best" marriage of all the family.

"And mine will be the 'worst,' of course," thought Roderick.

His smile would have been a sneer had

he not remembered *her*—the innocent girlish girl, scarcely yet a woman, before whose pure, true eyes all shams crumbled down into their natural dust, all contemptible worldlinesses fled away like ugly ghosts before the dawning light; all about her was so intensely real, so simply and directly in earnest, that in her presence nothing false could possibly live—at least for long.

"She will never do here," he felt sure, when, after forty-eight hours of Richerden life, the contrast between that and all he had left behind forced itself upon him with an almost exaggerated strength. "I must contrive, somehow, to migrate to Blackhall."

And doubtful as it all was still, though

he was but telling his mother the absolute truth in saying he did not know whether or not Mademoiselle Jardine would accept him, still, with the strong will of an honest man, he hugged to his heart the delicious thought, "I *will* have her. I love her, and I will make her love me. And if she loves me, no earthly power shall ever put us asunder."

The absolute necessity which almost every good man feels, not merely of a pretty girl to flirt with, a poetic mistress to adore, but of a wife—bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, while at the same time she is soul of his soul, his help, his comfort, his delight—had begun to cry out in this young man's heart with a sense of gnawing want which he felt

nothing external would ever now appease.

"I must have her," he repeated to himself. "I want her, I want her!"

He glanced round the glittering room. His mother had a dinner-party that night, and a small "carpet-dance" afterwards, at which were collected half the pretty girls of Richerden, with whom he had to dance by turns. But Roderick felt that he did not care two straws for any one of them, compared with that poor little girl sitting alone, in her black gown, with her pale cheeks and dim eyes, in the tiny salon that overlooked the silent lake of Neuchâtel.

CHAPTER XI.

A Righteous War.

IT was not till the third day after his return, which, being the day before the wedding, was of necessity kept free from visitors, that Roderick succeeded in finding his mother alone.

Coming into her "boudoir," as she called it, the little room off the drawing-room, which she made her place of refuge when she was not in sufficiently grand toilette for visitors, he saw her sitting

there, for "five quiet minutes." Not unwilling; for there was a tired look on her face which betrayed that she was scarcely a young woman now, though her energy and vitality carried her through so much; while her easy temper and perfect health had hitherto warded off any "crow's-feet" that might have been expected to appear on her still comely countenance. Still she looked a little the worse for wear, and very weary.

"Mother, you ought to rest; you will be ill, if you don't," said her son, going up to her with honest anxiety.

"I'll rest by-and-by," she answered, "when to-morrow is over. Oh, these weddings! these weddings! It's all very well for the young folks; but—the

parents! However, this is the last one. I have no more girls to marry."

"No, mother," said Roderick, sitting down by her, both out of real tenderness and because he felt that now was the golden moment which must not be let pass by—for there was a kind look in her eyes and a tremor in her voice, such as had not greeted him ever since he came home; "no, mother, your daughters are all safely disposed of. And when your son marries, he will faithfully promise that his wedding shall give you no trouble."

Mrs. Jardine drew back, then looked at the door, as if feeling herself caught in the toils and anxious to escape; but Roderick held her hand fast; ay, he put his arm round her waist in a tender, filial

way; he was determined to "have it out," as people say, with her; but he wished all to be done in the gentlest and most kindly fashion.

"Yes, mother, as I told you, there will, I trust, be another marriage in the family; but——"

"But not yet. Not for a very long time. I couldn't stand it—indeed, I could not. Don't let us talk about that. I am very busy, you see."

"Nay, mother, we must talk about it. I have been waiting to speak to you ever since I came home. You are the first and only person I can speak to on this subject. You must feel that."

"Feel what? Speak about what? Let me go. I declare I don't know what you

are driving at, and I can't put up with any nonsense—not just now."

Roderick turned pale with anger, but he controlled himself.

"It is not nonsense; I explained all in my letter—in my two letters—which you say you received."

"What; all about the little Swiss girl who you fancy is your cousin?"

"She is my cousin, there is no doubt of that; at least, remotely so; not near enough to warrant the slightest objection, which I know you have, to cousins marrying."

"Marrying! tut, tut, laddie; who spoke of marrying? Put such folly out of your head at once. Never let me hear of it again—or of her."

"Never hear of her again!" said Roderick, slowly, though his heart was burning with indignation, and the nervous trembling, which he always felt in moments of excitement, seemed to run through his whole frame. "Mother, you misunderstand the matter. You must hear of her. She is the lady whom I have chosen for my wife—if I can get her—my wife and your daughter-in-law."

"Goodness gracious me! You haven't made her an offer? You said you would not till you heard from me."

"And I have done as I said, mother. I came away without having made any declaration of love to her, without having even found out whether or not she loves

me. Though I consider myself bound, she is perfectly free."

"Then let her remain so," answered Mrs. Jardine, rising up with a look of great relief. "Well, Rody, my dear, I'm glad it's no worse. All young men have these 'smites'—ever so many, sometimes, before they settle down and marry. The best thing to be done is to run away, which you did. Now you will stay beside me, like a good son, all the winter. A very merry winter we shall likely have, on account of Bella's marriage. You will be going out a great deal, and will soon get over it."

"Get over it!" repeated Roderick, as he stood opposite to his mother, very quiet, but with gleaming eyes, and a cheek in

which the old Highland blood kept flashing and paling. "Get over what, mother?"

"This—this infatuation for the—the young person abroad."

"The young lady. You forget she is a Jardine."

"Is she? But she has got no money. She is a governess, or something of the sort?"

"She has not got a halfpenny in the world, and she earns her daily bread as a music-teacher," said Roderick, flinging the facts out in a sort of proud defiance. "Nevertheless, she is a perfect gentlewoman, and the dearest and noblest woman I ever met. If I can ever win her as mine, Providence will have been

only too kind to me. As for myself, I feel I am hardly good enough to tie her shoes."

"Oh, nonsense! every lad says that," cried the mother, with an involuntary glance of ill-disguised maternal pride. "And most lads make fools of themselves with some girl or other, and cause no end of bothers to their families, yet turn out douce, decent married men after all."

"As I hope to do, mother," said Roderick, striving hard to keep his temper. "You know you have always wished me to get married, and now I am going to do it—that is all. Only, I wished to pay you the respect of telling you first. So, the day after to-morrow, I shall go back

to Neuchâtel, and make my offer immediately."

Mrs. Jardine, who was just escaping from the room, turned round.

"You don't mean to tell me this to my very face?"

"Better tell you to your face than do it behind your back, as many sons might have done. But I am not a coward. What I do I am not ashamed to do openly, before you and all the world."

"The world!—oh! what will the world say?" cried the poor woman, in genuine despair. "And you, who I thought would make such an excellent marriage, with all your father's good looks and twice his cleverness—he was not clever, dear man! —and then he was always so very pecu-

liar. But you—oh, Rody, my son, my son!"

And she mourned over him, even as David mourned over Absalom, till Roderick hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry.

"Come, mother," he said at last, coaxingly—he knew she loved him, and was amenable to affection even more than to reason. "Don't let us quarrel. Every mother must have her son bringing her a daughter home some time; and if you only knew how sweet a daughter I hope to bring home to you. Not that she is pretty exactly, or perhaps you would not call her so."

"Not pretty—and no money—and a mere governess, or something! Why, Rody,

you must be mad—stark staring mad! I never will consent to it, never, as long as I live."

And Mrs. Jardine sat down on the sofa again, with a heavy flop. She was becoming strongly excited.

Then her son, in whom passion always culminated in a white heat, making him totally silent, sat down opposite to her, closing his lips firmly, determined that whatever he had to hear should not force from him, if he could help, one single violent or disrespectful word.

It was a very great trial, for Mrs. Jardine was one of the women who talk—who cannot be prevented from talking. Not that she was a foolish woman—quite the contrary; what she said was often

very good and to the point, only she said it too many times over. She argued in a circle, and came back exactly to where she started. Besides, she had the quality—good or bad according as it is used—of seeing a thing on half-a-dozen sides, till she almost forgot what was the original side on which she had beheld it. And then she overlapped plain facts in such a cloud of rhetoric, and had the power "to make the worse appear the better reason" in such an energetic way, that a "talk" with Mrs. Jardine was no easy matter, especially as she always expected to have two-thirds of the talk to herself.

As she certainly had now, Roderick listening with as much patience as he could muster to her arguments—all drawn from

the outside, from the experience and example of various of their mutual friends, and from conjectures as to what would be the opinion of various other friends, when the matter became known at large in Richerden society.

"You see, my dear boy, this is not an uncommon occurrence, when a young man is well off, and a girl is poor and wants to get married. Look at Andrew Patteson, for instance, who took a fancy to his sister's governess, and a pretty marriage it turned out to be, bringing upon the poor fellow about twelve brothers and sisters to maintain—grocers, too, or bakers or something. And then that dreadful business of James Macfarlane, who got into such a disreputable entanglement with his

mother's table-maid. Though that was not quite so bad for poor Mrs. Macfarlane, as I never heard of James's wishing to marry the table-maid."

"Good God!" cried Roderick, starting up, his honest young cheek flushing all over. "Mother, do you know what you are saying?"

Smitten to the heart—for at heart she was a good woman—Mrs. Jardine drew back, and her matron cheek also grew a shade redder.

"No, my dear, of course I did not mean that. James Macfarlane was severely to be blamed. And, thank God, you are quite different from him. You will never disgrace either yourself or me. But I don't want you to make a fool of yourself

either. I could not bear all Richerden to say that my son had thrown himself away upon a girl whom nobody knew, who was not even pretty, who in all probability just married him for his money."

This was a clever home-thrust, but it failed. Roderick, excited as he was, burst into a fit of sudden laughter.

"Marry me for my money! Well, that is a good joke! I assure you I have taken the greatest pains to conceal that I had any money at all. Neither she nor her mother has had the slightest idea that I am any better off than themselves."

Mrs. Jardine opened her eyes in undisguised astonishment. "Bless me!" she said, or rather muttered to herself, "what fools they must have been!"

Roderick tried not to hear, nor to answer, but in vain. Still he paused a minute before he allowed himself to speak, and then it was in that cold, quiet voice which implied so much; the sad self-control which the old are accustomed to use, but which is rather pathetic in the young. Only so much was at stake, and all he did was done for her. He would have borne to be "cut in little pieces," as people say, rather than that a finger's weight of blame or harm should fall on the woman he loved.

"Mother, I assure you Madame Jardine was not a fool; she was a highly cultivated, sensible, and prudent woman. And her 'folly,' if you call it so, in esteeming me for myself, and not for my outside

advantages, was, to say the least, rather complimentary to me. She liked me, I know that; and now she is dead I think of her with gratitude and tenderness."

"More than you do of your own mother, I daresay," said the poor woman, with an accent of not unnatural bitterness, till her son rose up, put his two hands on her shoulders, and regarded her with his honest, affectionate eyes.

"You can't look in my face, mother, and tell me that. You know you cannot."

And then she dropped on his neck, and kissed him, and cried—

"But you shouldn't have done this, Rody, my boy. It's very hard for a mother. Oh, my dear, I was sair left to myself when I let you go abroad."

Despite his vexation, Roderick could hardly help smiling.

"But, mother, you could not tie me to your apron-string for ever. I must some day go out into the world and find myself a wife. You ought to be glad that I have found one—if I do get her—the very sweetest that ever a man could get."

"How can I be sure of that? I don't know her."

"But I want you to know her. Don't misjudge her; only see her."

"Never!" said Mrs. Jardine, her natural strong will and love of power uprising to the rescue of her temporary softness.

Besides that paramount dread, "What will people say?" very potent with a woman like her, "content to dwell in de-

cencies for ever," and always afraid of compromising her newly-won position by doing something "odd" and unlike her neighbours, there was the lurking irritation that in the most important step of his life her son had acted without her knowledge, advice, or consent.

Perhaps few are conscious to what an extent this motive rules human actions, at least with certain natures. It is not so much the thing done which is objectionable, as that it is done without reference to themselves. In marriages especially, the parental egoism, only too common, which takes for granted that fathers and mothers must know best, whether or not they have the slightest means of knowing either the circumstances or the individual,

is a source of endless misery on both sides.

"Never!" cried Mrs. Jardine again. "You had better give the thing up, Roderick, for I will have nothing whatever to do with it, or with her."

"Very well," answered Roderick, and in his voice was a deadly quietness. "Now we know exactly where we stand. Mother, you are busy, you say, and I have also an engagement. Good morning."

"But you will be back to dinner?"

He paused a moment, and then answered, "Certainly."

"And you are not forgetting that to-morrow is the wedding-day?"

"I trust I am not in the habit of forgetting any of my duties."

She looked after him as he quitted the room, passing Bella, who just then entered, without word or look—indeed, he seemed to walk blindly, like a person half stunned; and her mind misgave her a little.

"I hope I haven't vexed the poor lad too much," said she, in repeating the conversation to Bella, who listened with only half an ear, being entirely absorbed in her own affairs. "But really it did seem such nonsense, and he only five-and-twenty. How can he possibly know his own mind?"

"Yes," answered Bella, carelessly, "it would be a great mistake to take the matter too earnestly, or to make any fuss about it. Let him alone, and he will soon

get over it. I hope he understood all about the bridesmaids' bouquets and lockets for to-morrow?"

"Oh! he will be sure to do all we want. He never forgets anything. He was always such a thoughtful, considerate boy, poor Rody! However, as you say he will soon get over it," added the mother, sighing, and trying to make herself believe exactly as she wished and willed.

True, her son was only five-and-twenty; and at that age ninety-nine out of a hundred young men would certainly have "got over it." But he happened to be the hundredth and exceptional one. Possibly, under different circumstances, there might have befallen him the lot of most dreamers—

"In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of this idol of my thought,"

who is, alas! not seldom

"Too early seen unknown, and known too late;"

but fate had been very merciful to his sheltered youth. He had never found any one to idealize into his perfect woman, until now: and having found her, not "too late," but early enough to consecrate her as his whole-life's blessing, he had strength enough, young as he was, to seize that blessing and hold it fast.

"I will hold her fast," he said to himself, in an outburst of sudden passion, which, however, was not yielded to till he found himself out of the house—out of the town—and tearing at a rapid pace along

the solitary road. "No power on earth shall take her from me."

And he clenched his hands and set his teeth. Like a frantic boy, it was a relief to have some physical outlet for his suffering; nay, at last, having walked several miles, almost without knowing it, overcome with bodily fatigue and mental pain, he sat down on a dyke-side, let his head drop between his hands, and sobbed outright like a child.

However, very soon manliness and courage returned—as well as the undying hope which is born with all first love, when it is strong and true. His mother must come round: it was ridiculous to suppose she should not. Of course she was vexed at first—well, perhaps it was a

little his own fault: he ought not to have startled her by such sudden candour, but prepared her, in some diplomatic way. Only he hated diplomacy: he felt a certain scorn, mingled with pity, for any persons with whom it is necessary to diplomatise.

"I must take the direct course, and trust Heaven for the rest," thought he. And, looking at his watch, he found it was so late that only by a steady pace homewards could he get back in time for dinner. For he had no idea of shirking that respectable meal, or of frightening his mother by his mysterious absence. That folly of weak and self-conceited people—the doing of things "for spite," or to punish other people, never entered his strong, straightforward, simple mind.

Besides, after the first shock, his hopeful, ardent youth refused to accept the worst. That his mother's fatal "never" should drop like a pall over his whole future life—over two lives! It could not be: it must not be. She was a good woman, a loving mother; and though it was her temperament sometimes to view things in an exaggerated light, still, if met quietly, patiently—ah! he remembered well how infinite his father's patience had been!—she gradually came round.

"Oh! that he was alive now, my dear, dear father! He would understand me; he was a young man once. I wonder if——"

And that story, never told, which one, or both, of those concerned had died with-

out telling, flitted faintly across Roderick's mind. Still it was but an old story, all gone by now; and his story was so lifelike, new, and young. All young people believe that never was there any passion so deep, any faithfulness so perfect, any suffering so keen, as their own. No wonder Roderick's thoughts soon drifted back from the dead past to the living present, and he wearied himself with troubled conjectures as to what his mother would do next; and, if so, what he must do next, till he came to the conclusion that the best thing would be to do nothing till after Bella's marriage.

So, returning home, he took his place there as if nothing were amiss; helped his mother and Bella as much as he could in

the endless "last things" which required to be seen to; and finally made them both laugh by giving vent to the heterodox remark, "that a wedding was almost as bad as a funeral."

"That speech did not look very like a young man in love," observed Bella, confidentially to her mother. "Depend upon it, he will soon get over it—they all do. Still I wonder what sort of girl she is, and if they are really so very fond of one another. Poor fellow!"

And perhaps there flashed upon the bride's mental eyes some momentary vision of a never attained, never sought to be attained Paradise, quite different from the one she was deliberately entering; a Paradise, not of wise, worldly men, or idle and

luxurious women, but only of innocent "fools." She sighed, in the midst of her laughter, gathered up her wreath and veil in one hand, and her Brussels lace pocket-handkerchief in the other, and disappeared up the stairs.

And on the stairs it was, in full view of the family, that Roderick bade his mother good night. She did not speak, nor he; for he knew that their next conversation must be the turning-point, the crisis in more than one destiny.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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